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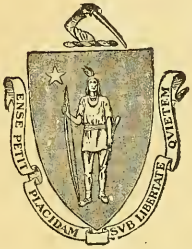

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THE

MINORCA FOWL.

BY

T. H. HARRISON.

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PREFACE.

During the past twenty years there has been an immense increase in the number of fanciers of the Minorca. Its grand qualities as a layer, its sombre plumage, its suitability for the close confinement of a town run as well as for the free range of the country, have made it a favourite wherever introduced. This increase in popularity has led to frequent demands for information on the history, characteristics and management of the breed. Poultry books before the public afford little assistance, and constant enquiries are made for a work devoted to the Minorca. I have waited long, hoping that some more competent hand would fill the breach, but as no one has come forward I have tried in the following way to supply what is wanted. The remarks are mostly personal experiences gained during an acquaintance of many years, and though I do not profess to offer instruction to those already initiated, I hope that even they may cull something useful, and may find something to commend. In setting forth the facts herein, I have to offer my sincere thanks to many well-known fanciers, especially to Messrs. Physick, Glanfield Peter, Harwood, Pitts, and Stafford, for many valuable hints, and my thanks are also accorded to the Editor of the Stock-Keeper for so kindly placing at my disposal any "material" he had. In launching this little work into the world, I sincerely hope that any faults may be mercifully considered, and any suggestions for improvement in a subsequent edition will be gladly welcomed by

T. H. Harrison.

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BLACK MINORCA COCKEREL.

"THE PREMIER."

Bred by and the Property of Messrs. Mogridge and Garlick, *winner of* 1*st and Cup, Crystal Palace ;* 1*st and Cup, Carlisle ;* 1*st and Medal, Scottish Minorca Club Show, Dumfries,* 1892.

THE MINORCA FOWL.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND HISTORY.

There is some considerable doubt and obscurity as to the exact origin of the Minorca. Some maintain that it is a sub-variety of the Spanish, bred to perfection through many generations. Others stoutly affirm that it is the parent of the Spanish, and in this opinion I agree. I am quite aware that this is contentious ground, but I think that careful consideration will convince most persons that this is probably correct. I have made some inquiry, but am not able to find that in any country bordering on the Mediterranean there is a race of fowls with a face like Spanish. As is well known, the best Spanish were found in the neighbourhood of Bristol, where they had been carefully bred for years. Their admirers were most enthusiastic, and small shows were frequently held at which the birds were exhibited. The fame of the Spanish spread rapidly; many fanciers "took them up," and they became popular, whilst the Minorca fanciers were to some extent in a state of lethargy, except perhaps in one or two districts. Those who have had a lengthened experience with Minorcas know how comparatively easy it is to produce birds with a large white lobe, and they are aware when this has been obtained how difficult it is to prevent the white from spreading over the face. Thus it will be seen that in course of time the white face of the Spanish may be produced and improved by careful breeding and selection. It is also well known that the great difficulty in breeding Spanish is to produce and maintain the fine quality of white, which easily

becomes streaked with red, and—if great judgment and care are not exercised—ultimately reverts to comparatively small lobes. I am aware that the carriage of the Spanish is more stilty than that of the Minorca, but let me ask breeders to look back for ten years, and they will note a very great alteration in the carriage of the Minorca itself. From a short-legged breed they have developed into a tall one, not unlike the Spanish of twenty years ago. Ordinary English people, not familiar with the breeds of poultry, had heard of the great laying powers of Spanish, and knew that they were black in plumage. It was not an uncommon thing to hear casual visitors at shows remark when passing Minorca pens, "What fine Spanish!" and even in these days one may occasionally hear such words—in fact, many look upon *all* black-plumaged birds as "Spanish." Which of these opinions is correct is really of little importance, and will probably never be satisfactorily settled.

History.—Fowls of the Minorca type are to be found in nearly all the countries bordering the Mediterranean, and on many of the islands off the coasts, but, like the Leghorns in Italy, these birds are much smaller than those found in England. The earliest records I can trace of the Minorca in England are dated 1834, at which date numbers of them were found in the western districts of England. The breed was undoubtedly introduced into this country by merchants and sailors trading between the Balearic Islands and the ports of Bristol, Devonport and Plymouth. Mr. Lewis Wright obtained some information upon the history of the breed from Mr. Leworthy, an old fancier at Barnstaple. The remarks are of interest, and I quote them from the "Illustrated Book of Poultry" as follows:—"There is more evidence than usual for the source of this breed being truly represented in its name. Mr. Leworthy told us that Mr. Willis, a friend of his, had seen them in Minorca, and the Rev. Thomas Cox, of Castle Cary, informs us on the direct authority of Sir Thomas Ackland, that his father, the former baronet, undoubtedly brought some from that island direct to England in 1834 or 1835, and kept them for years at Holnicote. It is doubtful if the fowl was not already known in the West of England, but there is no doubt that at least one strain did diverge from this ascertained importation, and the breed was for years known and prized in Devon, Cornwall and Somerset, before known elsewhere. Through Bristol, it gradually spread further." Mr. Harwood has given me some information on the history which will carry us back

many years. He informs me that in 1876, whilst living at Tiverton, Mr. Cosway, an old butcher, came to see his Minorcas. On being shown the birds he became very much excited and exclaimed, "I had 'um when a nipper; I had a pictur' of 'um painted by Mr. Capern." From this picture Mr. Harwood obtained photographs. At the present time there is living at Tiverton Mr. W. Beard, aged nearly 90 years. He states there were plenty of Minorcas to be found in that district when he was a boy, and they were not uncommon in the last century. He adds that the birds were then large, heavy and grand layers. Mr. Harwood tells me that there is a strong opinion that these birds were brought to the Western districts through prisoners of war, which at different times were sent there. During the French and Spanish wars at the end of last, and at the beginning of this century numbers of prisoners were interned at places in England. Many of these prisoners remained after peace was proclaimed, and they would appear to have had birds sent them from their homes in France and Spain. Mr. Harwood, when at Plymouth in 1870, got into conversation with a foreign sailor who spoke of Minorcas, and who said he always had a good look at them, as they put him in mind of home. That they had them in his country of three colours, blue, white and black, much coarser in body, and the combs of the cocks were cleft so that a portion hung down on each side of the head. Mr. Leworthy, whose name has already been mentioned, was well known throughout the west for his strain of Minorcas, and Mr. Harwood some little time since gave us in "Poultry" an account of his visit to Barnstaple, from which I take the following: "I was told there lived at Barnstaple a Mr. Leworthy, the real importer of Minorcas. A friend promised to drive me to Bampton, that was seven miles, but it rained and he would not go. Good Minorcas must be fetched, so off I walked to Dulverton, fourteen miles, took train to Barnstaple, saw Mr. Leworthy, had a chat, and carried away a pair of pullets." Mr. Leworthy no doubt imported several lots of these birds at different times, and Mr. Harwood made numerous pilgrimages to Barnstaple to see them and to secure some if possible, but they were small and of the Leghorn type. The Rev. Cruwys in the middle of the century was a noted breeder of Black Game near Tiverton, and he used the Minorcas occasionally. To this day many Minorcas that hail from Tiverton and its neighbourhood are celebrated for a red iris to their eye and good red faces with a "gipsy" tinge.

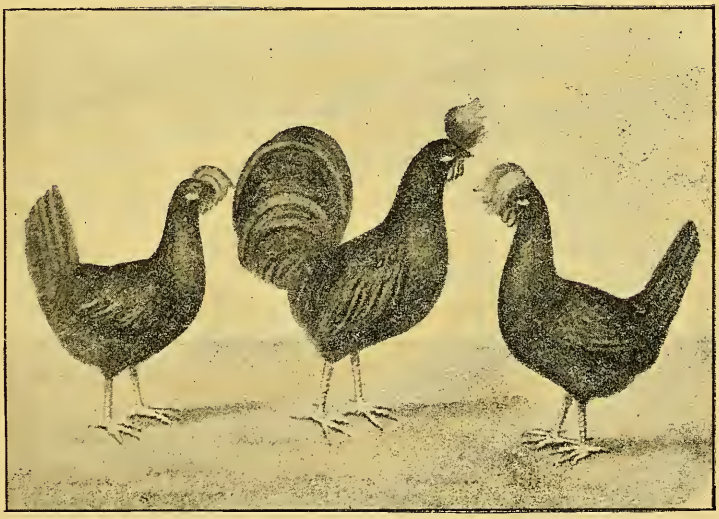
Mr. Physick, of Exeter, tells me that he had a conversation with the late Mr. Roscorla, an ardent and well-known fancier in Cornwall, about twenty years ago, who stated that he remembered his father saying he had known and kept the breed for forty years prior to 1870. This gentleman, Mr. Roscorla, had some very large birds, and was often taxed with having infused foreign blood into his strain, but he would never admit it. However, his strain had some distinctive characteristics peculiar to themselves, and there are evidences that the tinted egg may be traced to this strain. The late Mr. Prinn, of Exeter, kept them as far back as 1855, and he stated to Mr. Physick that they were then great, massive birds, very short in legs, with splendid faces, very large deeply serrated combs, long narrow lobes, and plumage as black as crows. He remarked also that white faces were unknown, and that if by any chance a speck of white appeared on a bird it was at once killed. Mr. Croot, of Wellington; Mr. Williams, of Plymouth; Messrs. Blackwell and Jeffries, and Rev. Watson—all bred Minorcas in times past, and were persistent in their efforts to make their birds popular. Some of the oldest and most persistent of these admirers are still alive, and take as much interest as ever in the breed.

For years there were no classes for Minorcas at many of the most important shows outside the Western Counties of England, but the extension of the press and the invention of railways made knowledge of the breed more common, and provided an easier means of distribution. The valuable properties the fowls possessed became known. Enthusiastic admirers were never tired of extolling the virtues of their stock. In later times there was always to be found a pen or two of Minorcas in the Variety Class at shows; interest in the breed became excited, and when once known as layers were approved. Their fame extended to all parts of the empire, and rapidly "caught on" in America. In the west country no show would be considered complete unless there was a class or two for Minorcas, and it was no uncommon thing to find as many as fifty to one hundred birds in a class. I remember at Plymouth, on one occasion, Mr. Harwood winning first and cup *in a show of* 113 *exhibits*. A class was provided at Birmingham in 1882, but few exhibits were secured. At the Palace show since 1882 classes have been provided, but in the earlier days they were considered of minor importance, and the prize money was not very

large. I give below a statement of exhibits at the Palace shows since 1882, which will serve as a capital illustration of the progress made by the breed.

Year	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892
Classes provided	2	2	4	4	4	6	8	6	6	6
Numbers of exhibits	32	70	98	89	121	142	187	136	110	123

The Minorca Club Show was held at Liverpool in 1891, and in one class there were eighty-four pullets. At the Club show in 1892, held at Bridgwater, there were 270 Minorcas exhibited. The Club was established in 1886, and Mr. A. G. Pitts was elected president, with Mr. Stafford as secretary. This helped to increase the popularity of the breed, and no doubt did much to increase the number of exhibits at the Palace that year. The Club has drawn up and formulated a "Standard of Perfection," and has greatly assisted in disseminating a knowledge of the Minorca. I may be permitted here to urge all my readers to join the Club; the subscription is merely a nominal sum of half-a-crown a year, with an entrance fee of five shillings. Mr. P. Stafford, Elmsleigh Hall, Leicester, will be glad to receive the names of intending members, and will give all information.



Portraits of a trio of Minorcas painted in 1810, *and referred to on page* 11.

CHAPTER II.

QUALITIES.

The quality upon which the Minorca has founded its world-wide reputation is that of being a splendid layer. Personally I have never taken an exact record of the numbers of eggs laid by any particular hen, but during my residence in the Isle of Wight I had a pen of eight hens and pullets, which from January to June produced an average of forty eggs per week. This result was published in the *Bazaar* newspaper amongst some correspondence in 1886 or 1887. Several well-known fanciers have recorded the number of eggs laid by certain birds. Mr. Hopkins gives an average of 226 eggs from four pens. Mr. Physick gives 184 eggs as an average from seven *hens* (not pens, as in Wright's book). Mr. Amesbury recorded 200 eggs from one hen when she was four years old. The latter I have every reason to know is correct, for I have one of her daughters, and she is a splendid layer of large eggs. I think there is little doubt but that many of the Minorcas of to-day are behind those of former times in the number of eggs laid. The great rage of the present day is to put into the show pen a bird likely to win a prize, hence alien blood has been imported at one time or another, sometimes with one object, sometimes with another. Those who have had a long experience with Minorcas, and who closely examine many of the present-day birds will be able to trace in them a cross of Langshan blood. This no doubt was introduced to give increased size, to obtain a more brilliant colour, and to improve the face. It will be apparent in certain directions, *e.g.*, the web between the toes will be found to be of a pinky colour, which often extends up the outside of the leg. The crow of a true Minorca is short, sharp and piercing, whilst that of the improved (?) birds is generally long and drawling. The eggs of Minorcas are as a rule very large, of a delicate flavour, and pure white. Suspicion of impurity must always fall upon those birds which lay a tinted egg. Early development

is one of the good qualities these birds possess. It is no uncommon thing to find well-fed pullets commence laying at five months old, and many instances are on record in which they have begun at an earlier date. There is a general idea abroad that Minorcas are not winter layers, but this is incorrect. If warmly housed, well fed, and sheltered from cold and wet they may be depended upon at all seasons for eggs. They are, as a rule, small eaters. I tried a pen of six Minorcas against an equal number of Plymouth Rocks, and another of Langshans, all with the same kind of food, exactly under the same conditions, and at the same time of the year. The Rocks and Langshans consumed about one-third more food than the Minorcas, and laid one-third less eggs. Minorcas, it is well known, are non-sitters, and to those who keep poultry solely for eggs, such a quality is of importance. It will sometimes happen, however, that a bird will have a desire to sit. In such an event the greatest difficulty will be experienced in repressing this wish. I have an idea that it is becoming more prevalent, and I think that lovers of the pure stock should do all they can to eradicate it. The Minorca should be what it is intended, a non-sitting breed, and many hold the opinion that *all* birds who evince a desire to sit are showing the effects of some cross, near or far. The person who has hens amongst his stock that show any wish to sit should see that desire gratified, and the bird should sit upon the dinner table. The owner of such birds has no right to show such, nor to sell eggs from them, because in his own mind he does not like them, and feels conscious that they possess tainted blood. Minorcas are remarkably good foragers, and if given their liberty will work hard to secure a large portion of their own living. Another good trait in them is their suitability for close confinement. If well fed and their wants carefully attended to they will do almost as well in a small run or a back yard in a crowded town as if upon a grass run in the country. This I can vouch for from actual experience. One of the best pullets I ever bred was reared in a run above another run, the brood were never upon the solid earth, nor was this pullet ever out of her run until she was taken to a show, when she won first prize in a large class of twenty-nine hens, special for the best hen, special for the best Minorca, and Poultry Club Medal for the best bird in the show, 250 exhibits competing and Mr. Comyns judging. This, together with their splendid laying qualities, has done more to popularise the breed than almost anything else. Many of the best Minorca fanciers of our time are

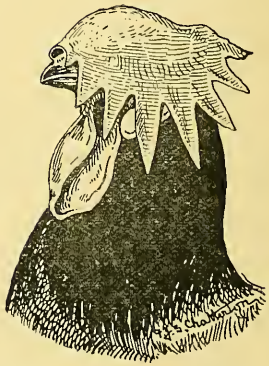
working men, who have but little space, but who take an intense pride in their stock.

A further good quality they own is their suitability for crossing with nearly all other breeds to improve the laying qualities. A Minorca cock used with Langshan, Brahma, Plymouth Rock, Houdan, Dorking, or Game hens will produce some remarkably useful stock, good layers and good table birds. The Minorca itself is not generally considered to be a good table bird, and this is correct if it be judged by the standard of Indian Game, Dorkings, &c. The flesh is close, white, juicy, and of fine flavour. A well-fatted bird nicely prepared for table is by no means to be despised, being very toothsome and very much like turkey in flavour. Chickens from a cross with Game are very plump and very fine eating. The bones and offal of Minorcas are not abundant, and compare favourably in this respect with larger breeds. The shape and general appearance is pleasing, whilst the black (or white) plumage, brilliant red combs and wattles, adorned with the pure white lobes, make it an attractive bird. Its one colour makes it in that particular a comparatively easy bird to breed, but the very keen competition at nearly every show makes it equally difficult to breed a bird good enough to win a first prize. The true fancier must never lose sight of the chief quality of the breed, and though he may desire to win prizes he should always make diligent inquiry as to the laying powers of the strain he selects.

A good type of comb.

Too heavy a comb.

A mean comb.



A badly falling comb.

CHAPTER III.

POINTS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

For some time before the advent of the Minorca Club there had been discussions and suggestions as to the various "points" necessary to make up a good Minorca. The first work of the Club, when established, was to consider and draw up a "Standard of Perfection" that should be a guide to breeders to try to produce, and there is little doubt but that every effort has been put forth to work to this scale. Let us first consider the cock. His beak should be fairly long, not too straight, and of a dark horn colour throughout, though one occasionally meets with a good bird more or less light in colour round the edges of the beak. The head should be long and broad enough to carry a good base of comb. I am not altogether sure that the term "long" is here a good one. We do not want a head approaching in length anything like that of Game, nor in breadth like the Malay or Aseel. The comb is one of the chief "fancy points" of the breed, and there is ample scope for the ingenuity of the fancier to produce one well up to requirements. It must be single, large, evenly and deeply serrated, with five to seven spikes; the shape of these spikes is important. In some specimens they are not deep enough, and are rounded so that they look not unlike pegs let into the blade or body of the comb; such must be avoided. The spike should be about equal in depth to the blade of the comb, and each spike should be broad at the base, or wedge shaped, tapering from the bottom upwards. The comb must be perfectly upright, and firmly set on the head with a good broad base, straight in front and free from any twist, thumb marks, or hollows at the side. Here are to be found the chief weaknesses. A comb otherwise good will sometimes have an ugly twist in front over the beak; these twists are often caused by the comb extending too far over the front of the beak, and when the bird is young, feeding it from a trough which strikes the front of the comb every time it takes a mouthful. Many combs have

hollows, or as they are termed thumb marks, on the side ; these are a source of weakness to the stability, and at any moment may cause the comb to go over to one side or other. The carriage of the comb at the back is equally important, for whilst it is desirable that it should reach well down on the neck, it should not go so far as to touch the feathers, as may be seen in some specimens. There must be no side growths or sprigs ; such are to a great extent an evidence of a cross. The texture of the comb and wattles should be rough, not smooth like those of the Spanish. The colour of the comb, face and wattles, should be a bright blood red. The term coral red is too elastic, and the term *dark* blood red scarcely expresses the exact colour that is desired. The wattles are to be long, thin, pendulous, rounded at the ends, and open. They must not be like the short thick round wattles generally found on the Hamburgh. The colour of the face is a crucial test in deciding the merits of a bird. It might be well to suggest to the Minorca Club a very good motto, "My face is my fortune, Sir," for unless this feature is *perfect* in colour all other good points sink into insignificance, and do not receive a second scrutiny. No *trace* of white must appear—not even a line or a spot under the eye. Some strains are very dark in the colour of the face, and these are known as "gipsy" faced birds; they seldom go white. Occasionally we come across a bird whose face is covered with small hairs or feathers. It used to be the practice to extract these feathers, much in the same way that the faces of Spanish are trimmed, but now they are usually shown quite naturally. The earlobe has been a great means of bringing the white face. Formerly the lobes were small elongated patches, which looked as if they were glued to the side of the head, but about ten years ago an agitation was initiated in the press, and an "almond-shaped" lobe was advocated. To Mr. Harwood is due the credit of having invented the phrase "almond lobe," and if readers can refer back to the *Stockkeeper* and examine its criticism on the Poultry Club's first show at Cambridge, they will find the following remarks on the first prize bird:— "We congratulate Mr. Harwood on winning with what he has so persistently advocated, a medium sized almond lobe." Some judges favoured a large open lobe, whilst others preferred a medium sized one. Mr. Dixon has, I believe, always favoured the former, whilst Messrs. Harwood, Tebay, Hewitt, and Nicholls were very strong in their support of the latter. Consequently, there were birds bred

with lobes of both types, and such may still be seen in the show pens.

The Minorca Club's standard is given below. There has been established during the past year a Club in London to further the interests of the Minorca. This Club has been considering the standard of the Minorca Club, and with a view to make that standard a little clearer has added certain words, and at the same time has embodied the points of colour with the general characteristics. These alterations or additions are not yet in type, and I give them from notes made during discussion. They are noted below in italics.

MINORCA STANDARD OF PERFECTION.

General Characteristics.

COCK.

Beak.—Fairly long, but stout [*dark horn colour*].

Head.—Long and broad, so as to carry comb quite erect.

Comb.—Single, large, evenly serrated, perfectly upright, firmly set on head, straight in front, free from any twist or thumb mark reaching well to the back of the head, moderately rough in texture, free from any side sprigs [*not too far over the front of beak, spikes equal to the blade in depth, arching well over but not touching the neck hackle at the back, five to seven spikes, coral red*].

Wattles.—Long, rounded at the ends [*open, coral red*].

Face.—Fine in quality, as free from feathers or hairs as possible, and not showing any white [*coral red, absolutely devoid of white*].

Earlobe.—Medium in size, almond-shaped, smooth, flat, fitting close to the head [*pure white in colour*].

Eye.—Full, bright and expressive [*dark*].

Neck.—Long, nicely arched, with flowing hackle.

Body.—Broad at shoulder, square, and compact [*deep*].

Back.—Broad, and rather long [*and flat*].

Wings.—Moderate in length, neat, and fitting close to body [*free from white feathers*].

Breast.—Full and rounded.

Thighs, Legs and Feet.—Medium length and stout [*thighs, medium length and stout; legs and feet, medium length, black or dark horn*].

Toes.—Four [*set well apart*].

Tail.—Full, sickles long, well arched, and carried well back.

Size.—Large.

Carriage.—Upright, graceful.

Weight.—From 5½ lbs. to 8 lbs.

Plumage [*tight and glossy black*].

HEN.

Beak.—Fairly long, but stout [*dark horn colour*].

Head.—Long and broad.

Comb.—Single, fairly large, evenly serrated, arched, drooping well down over side of face, slightly rough in texture, free from any side sprigs [*evenly and deeply serrated, drooping well over the side of face so as not to obscure sight, five to seven spikes*].

Wattles.—Long, rounded at the ends.

Face.—Fine in quality, as free from feathers or hairs as possible, and not showing any white.

Earlobe.—Medium in size, almond-shaped, smooth, flat, fitting close to the head, rather more rounded than in cock.

Eye.—Full, bright and expressive.

Neck.—Long, nicely arched.

Body.—Broad at shoulder, square and compact [*deep*].

Back.—Broad and rather long [*and flat*].

Wings.—Moderate in length, neat, and fitting close to the body [*free from white feathers.*]

Breast.—Full and rounded.

Thighs, Legs and Feet.—Medium length and stout [*thighs, medium length and stout; legs, black or dark slate*].

Toes.—Four [*set well apart and straight*].

Tail.—Full, neat, carried well back [*compact*].

Size.—Large.

Carriage.—Upright and graceful.

Weight.—From 5 lbs. to 6½ lbs.

Plumage [*tight and glossy black*].

Colour of Black Minorcas.

COCK AND HEN.

Beak.—Dark horn colour.

Eye.—Dark.

Comb, Face and Wattles.—Dark blood red.

Earlobe.—Pure white.

Legs.—Black, or very dark slate.

Plumage.—Glossy black.

Colour of White Minorcas.

Beak.—White.

Eye.—Red.

Comb, Face, Wattles.—Blood red.

Earlobe.—Pure white.

Legs.—Pinky white.

Plumage.—Glossy white.

Value of Defects in Judging Minorcas.

	Points.
Defects in face—bloated red, coarseness, or too hairy ...	15
Bad shape or twisted comb [*badly serrated*]	15
Want of size [10]	15
Wrinkled, folded or stained lobe	10
Defects in colour	10
Want of condition	10
Want of style and symmetry [15]	10
Too light legs, eyes, or beak	8
Crooked breastbone	7
	100

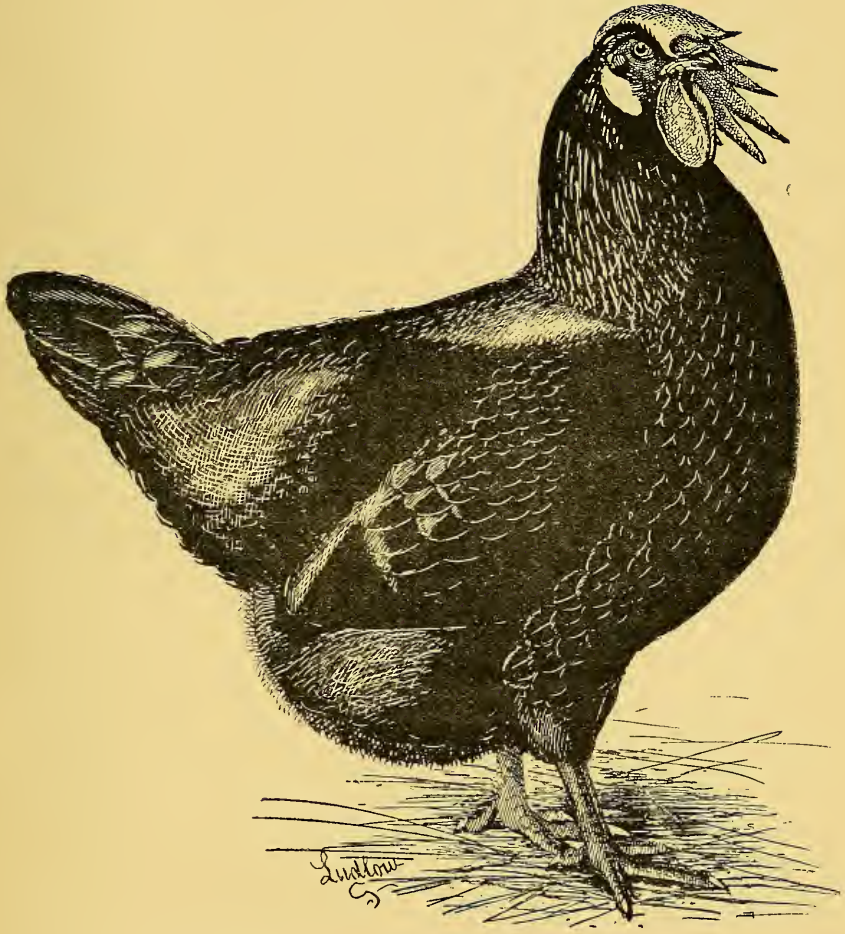
A Perfect Bird to Count 100 *Points.*

Fatal Defects.—White in face; wry or squirrel-tailed; feathers on legs; other than single-combed; coloured plumage, other than black or white in the several varieties; other than four toes [*on each foot*]; legs, other colour than black or slate in black Minorcas, or [*pinky*] white in white Minorcas.

CHAPTER IV.

SELECTION OF STOCK.

Some strains have been bred entirely with a view to obtain the best exhibition points. With care and selection birds may be bred equally good for exhibition and for usefulness. There are many ways that a budding fancier may begin with Minorcas. If his pocket be well filled, and he does not mind expense, he may visit shows and purchase birds just as they take his fancy, but this is not always a royal road to success. The prize birds he may buy may not "nick," and their produce may not come up to the standard of their parents. I have in my mind at this moment a fancier who at one of our principal shows gave long prices for a couple of winners, but to the best of my knowledge these birds never produced anything nearly equal to the quality of themselves. A second plan still less satisfactory is the stocking a poultry house with birds "picked up" at auction sales. There are occasions when good birds are offered, but as a rule no reliance can be placed upon stock purchased in this manner, and which are often sold because the vendor is not thoroughly satisfied with them. The cheapest and best plan in the end will be to purchase a pen of birds direct from a well-known breeder. The price demanded may be a trifle higher than would have to be paid by buying them singly, but it must be borne in mind that the buyer is also purchasing the breeder's experience ; that, in fact, he is being put upon an equality with the seller. If the latter be a reliable, honourable man there is little doubt but that this will be the shortest and best method to pursue. A fourth plan is to buy from friends who are known to possess a good strain. In this case a pen of good birds may be obtained for a smaller sum, and the result *may* be equally satisfactory. If there be accommodation for rearing chickens, a cheap and good plan is to buy a sitting of eggs and hatch them. Here let me offer a word of warning. A breeder cannot



BLACK MINORCA HEN.

afford to lose time and money in getting together a good lot of birds, and then sell their eggs for a small sum. It is therefore quite useless for a person to buy a cheap sitting of eggs, and then to grumble and be disappointed if he does not breed winners from them. There are scores of fanciers who keep good birds and who will supply sittings of reliable eggs *the same as they are breeding from themselves* at a moderate price. If it be decided to begin with birds, the autumn or winter will be found the best time to get a stock at a reasonable price. In the early autumn many breeders are anxious to dispose of some of their adult stock to make room for chickens, and thus opportunity will offer to secure good adult stock at a reasonable price. In the winter breeders will wish to dispose of some of their young stock, and such may be bought at a moderate cost. If it be decided to rear chickens, the spring will be found the proper time.

In concluding this chapter, let me urge upon my readers the importance of buying, or breeding, only from birds which are of good quality, strong, healthy, and vigorous. Health and strength of constitution are most necessary to success, and it is an absolute waste of time and money to attempt to breed good birds from sickly, weedy, weak stock. Let us all try to do our share to maintain, or to improve this splendid fowl in which we are so interested.

CHAPTER V.

WHITE MINORCAS.

These differ but in colour from the Black Minorcas, and it is by no means an uncommon thing for White sports to be produced from Blacks. I remember in 1886 buying a pair of birds exhibited by Mr. Dominy at the Palace. They bred three pure white chickens, which I gave to the late Mr. R. W. Wallace, of Arreton, I.W., who passed them on to his brother-in-law. That gentleman bred from them Whites which were Second and V.H.C. at the Palace. Here, then, we have an authentic case of black producing white, and continuing to produce white. Their colour is against them, and they have never been so popular as the blacks, hence they have not been bred with the same care probably.

From very chickenhood it is necessary to give them protection from the powerful rays of the sun, or their feathers will become tanned. This is not always a convenient thing to do, and many schemes have been devised to give the birds plenty of exercise without letting the sun injure the colour of the feathers. Country runs may be thickly planted with trees. Town runs are mostly covered over, and may be shaded by planting trees or creepers in front. Those who have large outhouses may make use of them. Others may make small runs of a light frame work, easily moved from place to place and covered with strong calico.

Previous to their going to a show it will be necessary to wash white birds. This, again, prevents some persons from keeping them, as they do not know how to wash them, nor do they care to learn. Perhaps a few words on this subject may not be out of place. Two tubs, or ordinary zinc baths should be nearly filled with water, one with warm—about 90°—the other about 50°. Make some lather or soapsuds before putting the bird into the water. Sunlight soap is the very best of its kind that I know for such a purpose. It possesses great cleansing power without being too greasy for the

purpose. Now take the bird in the hand and gently plunge him into the hot water. At the same time rub well under and into the feathers. There is no need to fear that the feathers will break off; they will easily bend when well wetted. When you think that all the dirt has been removed, carefully look the bird over to see that you have not left the dirt in patches round the tail, tips of wings, and thighs. If you are satisfied, then rinse off in the other water, which should be slightly tinged with blue. Do not fear to plunge him well into the water time after time until all the soap is removed. A sponge will be of use now to dry off the water, after which use a soft dry cloth. He should then be put in a clean basket in which you have previously put some fresh straw or hay, and should be put within the influence of a good fire, yet not so close that he will scorch, nor the feathers be drawn nor twisted. The skin of the comb and face will easily blister, so great care must be exercised.

The legs should receive attention. If the dirt has got under the scales, a pointed match will be found useful to remove it.

CHAPTER VI.

MATING.

The mating of Minorcas to breed exhibition stock is a subject that even to an old hand occasions very careful study. As the bird is of self-coloured plumage it may be thought that it is an easy matter to breed good birds. Really it is not so, but this general idea that little care and consideration are necessary causes very much disappointment. Thousands of Minorcas are bred every year, and it must be in the knowledge of most of my readers that there are amongst them not more than one or two per cent. of really good birds. Indeed, the production of a good specimen is more often due to accident than to the care with which an owner has mated his breeding pen. Some persons favour the plan of putting up two pens of birds, one to breed cocks and the other to breed pullets. This is a proceeding I do not in any way like. I have never followed it, nor do I consider it necessary in the case of the Minorca. No doubt better results can be obtained in following out such a plan where the birds are of a pencilled plumage, such as Hamburghs, Brahmas, Leghorns, &c. If the owner simply wishes to produce stock solely for eggs then it matters but little about the points of his breeding pen, providing he has assured himself of the general good quality, the purity of every bird, and that each is of a good laying strain. The greater number of my readers will wish to produce stock for exhibition, and I will try to give a few hints likely to be of service in this respect. The standard of perfection must be studied, and with this in mind the breeder must carefully review every bird in his pen. In doing this he must use an impartial as well as a critical eye. He must not look upon his birds with the eye of a fond parent, magnifying their good points and hiding or passing over the weak ones, hoping that such and such may not make much difference. Nature will not be thus tender, therefore the faults of each bird must be as equally weighed as their excellencies. If

these faults are duly estimated it may be possible to balance them by super-excellence in the particular point on the other side. Having looked carefully over the birds, consider well if any of them do not come up to your ideal. If that be so, do not hesitate to remove them, or at any rate do not breed from them. Let the ideal be to breed birds that shall be lasting, not mushroom birds which grow early ready for the show pen, have a short existence, and then die out as exhibition birds. What we want in Minorcas is to find birds that at two or three years old shall be as good in comb or face as when they are younger. There are one or two well defined rules the breeder should bear in mind. The cock influences the style, colour, and fancy points, whilst the hen chiefly influences the size, shape, style, and head points. The cock selected should be of the highest quality that the breeder's means allow him to obtain. His body should be large without being coarse, and should be well set upon stout dark legs. His thighs should be of medium length, and should be placed so as to balance the body easily. If placed too far back it gives the bird too upright a carriage, somewhat like Game, and often causes him to be what is called squirrel tailed. His comb should be of medium size, broad at the base, and set firmly on the head. This latter point is of more importance than appears at first sight. Many combs are fixed to the head with a thin base, which swells out on the head and appears to be firmer than it really is. These are likely to fail to produce the kind of combs that are wanted. If possible, the comb should be without hollows, thumb marks, or twists, and of course there should be no side sprigs. The serrations are best if evenly and deeply cut, but in my mind this is but of secondary importance, as the hens will remedy any shortcomings in that direction. The lobe should be of good almond shape, white and smooth, like the kid of a new white glove. Do not breed from a bird with a badly creased, folded, or round lobe. The face must be of bright red, "absolutely devoid of white." His plumage should be full, flowing, of a rich deep black, close and tight in texture. His eye should be dark and bright, "bull-eyed," as such are termed, not with a light hazel eye. Now let us consider the style of hen we want with him.

First, then, to produce pullets, the hen, if of the second season, will be stronger, and produce more robust chickens, her head and comb should be large, hanging gracefully, growing with a good base from the head, coming over the beak for about an inch and then

falling over to the opposite side so as not to obscure the sight of the eye. To produce cocks, the hen of the same age as for pullet breeding, good carriage, as large in body as possible without any coarseness. Her head should be neat, her face clear, and her lobe smooth and well shaped. Her comb should be small, thick, well cut, and well carried. It should spring firmly from the base, and be as evenly and deeply serrated as possible. A hen that has a badly serrated comb is very likely to produce cockerels with poor combs, and, if the hens comb is thin and loose she probably will breed cockerels with hollow, thumb-marked combs. Crooked breast bones should be avoided, for in many cases they are a sign of weakness in the strain, but in this case the breast bone often has a lateral curve. The majority owe this deformity to improper perches, or to being allowed to perch too early. I have already spoken of health and vigour, but I may again be allowed to press home the importance of breeding only from stock of known strength and constitution. The number of hens to be mated with one cock must, to a great extent, be regulated by the time of the year and the objects the breeder has in view. If large strong chickens are desired early in the season, not more than four hens should be put in one pen. If eggs be the sole object, then the number of hens is not of so much importance, and may reach as high as ten or more. I have heard a gentleman say that he bred some of his best layers and most vigorous stock from a pen of thirty hens and one cock. This may be all very well, but it is far too large a number from which to hope to produce exhibition stock, and the fancier will find better results by mating four hens, and then adding one or two more as the weather improves.

CHAPTER VII.

BREEDING, HATCHING AND REARING MINORCAS.

The breeding of exhibition stock is a work upon which there is much difference of opinion as to the means to be employed to arrive at a satisfactory issue. Each prominent exhibitor has a plan of his own which he generally considers superior. One likes early breeding, whilst another is not infatuated with very early birds; a third likes to use hens in preference to incubators; whilst a fourth objects to Mr. So and So for in-breeding. The plans of the breeder will in some measure determine the proceedings of the breeding season. If the fancier wishes to exhibit at the early summer shows it will be necessary to mate the birds on or before the 1st of January. The ordinary fancier will find that if he makes up his pens by 1st of February he will be able to get chickens in plenty in March and April. Birds hatched during these months frequently outstrip those that were hatched earlier. I am aware that some persons, young fanciers especially, are eager to see chickens around them, but in this matter they will find it better to be guided by the experience of older fanciers. Minorcas hatched between the second week of March and the same week in April will, if well cared for, be ready for the Dairy Show. Before attempting to breed chickens it is well to make sure that the stock birds are in good health and condition. This is specially needful in the case of the cock. If attention be not given to this matter a large number of unfertile eggs will be one result, and weakly chickens another. In the early parts of the season the cock should be frequently handled at night, and his crop felt. Some birds are very gallant and attentive, and will not eat until the hens have fed. If, then, the cock be found thin and his crop empty, he should be taken out and fed by himself, giving a small portion of meat as a stimulant.

We come now to the actual work of hatching the chickens—a

business in which I assume all my readers have had more or less experience. Hatching may be done by means of incubators or by the sitting hen. There is no difference in the result obtained by either method. The chickens are as strong by the one plan as the other, though some persons think that incubators produce weakly chickens. An incubator is a very valuable acquisition to the "impedimenta" of the Minorca fancier, and of course may be used at all times. If there are no broody hens on hand when the chickens—come from the incubator, then a heated rearer must be provided to take over the brood. These machines are somewhat costly, and unless a person wishes to produce many chickens, he will find the "old hen" the most convenient. The Minorca being a non-sitter, some difficulty is often experienced in finding suitable brooders just at the time they are required, and arrangements should be made beforehand. Many fanciers are able to hire hens for the purpose, giving three shillings to four shillings for the hen, and agreeing with the owner to return her when done with, and to resell her for two shillings or half-a-crown. In using hens, some care should be taken to make the nests comfortable and such that the eggs may be brought well into contact with the hen's body. The bottom of the nest should consist of five or six inches of damp soil, so hollowed out that it looks not unlike a pudding mould. This should be lined with soft hay, chaff or moss. Straw is objectionable, as it cools the eggs by permitting cold air to pass inside the stem. An orange box may be made suitable for three hens to sit at one time, whilst a sugar box will provide for one or two. In any case I think it desirable that the hen should be covered up so that she can only get off her nest at the will of the owner. She should be allowed off for a few minutes daily, to dust and to get a little exercise. At this time she should be supplied with good corn and clean water, as much of each as she chooses to take. It is very important that she be fed every day in order to keep up the heat of the body, and if she does not come off she must be lifted off.

Sitting hens brought from other yards are occasionally subject to severe attacks of diarrhœa. This is often caused by a sudden change of food, extra warmth, and at other times may be brought about by a change in the habits and conditions of living. Something must be done to stop it, or the bird will become so weakened that it will not sit its time out. Change of food should be tried. Rice, boiled and allowed to go cold, when a small amount of bone

meal may be mixed with it, is often of service in these cases. If the hen leaves the nest the eggs may be preserved for a couple of days or more by packing them in well-warmed bran or meal. When the time arrives for the chickens to hatch, there should be as little interference as possible, but occasionally a little judicious help will save a bird or two. In any case, if the hen is the least excitable she should be left alone, or she will do more harm than anyone can do good. Supposing, now, the chickens to be hatched they will require to be removed, and in the majority of cases I have no doubt they will be cooped. Before putting the hen in the coop she should be well fed on some satisfying grain, so that when the chickens are put with her she may attend to, call, and feed them.

A word now on the coop. It may be of any shape provided it carries out the following principles:—(1) It gives ample room for the hen to move about. (2) It gives shelter from rain and wind. (3) It can be easily moved about. (4) It is easy to keep clean. (5) Is safe against vermin at night. One thing that must be specially provided for, is sufficient ventilation. In many coops the chickens are shut up at night, and there is no provision whatever for this, consequently the chickens do not thrive well, and many of them die off with colds or roup. A small attachable run will be found serviceable, and if made high enough at the sides will protect the chickens from cold winds and help them forward surprisingly. Chickens differ from adult fowls in that it is almost impossible to feed the former too often, provided they will eat up all that is given. The great object must be to promote rapid growth by judicious feeding. If the youngsters experience a check they will seldom fully recover from it, hence every possible care should be taken to keep them going ahead. I do not care for an abundance of soft food for Minorca chickens, especially for the cocks, as it stimulates the combs too much—makes them soft, and they go over. One feed of soft food each day, or at the most one in the morning and one at night is quite sufficient. This soft food should consist of one-third biscuit meal, one-third coarse oatmeal, and one-third fine middlings, with just a little liverine. As the chickens get older every inducement to take plenty of exercise should be provided. Exercise is the greatest factor in developing the latent qualities of the stock, and without it chickens from the best parents will only be moderate specimens. Green food of some kind must be daily supplied unless the birds have access to grass. Clean water should always be

within their reach, and if they are given a small quantity of animal food every day they will relish it, and it will be beneficial. One thing I must not forget, and that is to impress upon the breeder to supply his stock with grit in some form. A little may be scattered upon a board laid in front of the coop, and if the soft food be thrown upon this they will pick up some of the grit unconsciously. Fresh bones should be broken as small as possible, and they will work wonders in developing bone in the chickens. If any of the young stock are found to look dull and listless they should be caught and examined. Vermin will probably be found on different parts, and to rid the chicks of these pests, their heads, under the wings, and round the vent should be anointed with a mixture of equal parts of oil and paraffin.

Minorcas are very precocious birds, and the sexes should be separated as early as possible. Not only is this beneficial to prevent the birds worrying each other, but to prevent fighting among the cockerels, and really because the cockerels require somewhat a different treatment to the pullets; the latter may receive much more soft food than the former. None of the chickens should be allowed to perch until five or six months old, when the cartilage of the breast has become fairly hard. Even when allowed to perch care must be taken that the perches are of a suitable size that the chickens can grasp with the feet. If the cockerels grow very fast they may get into a weakened condition, and if at this time they receive much soft food their combs are sure to go over. In such an event they should be fed upon hard corn alone, and at night a small No. 1 cod liver oil capsule may be given with advantage. Pullets are liable to come into laying sooner than desired, and to prevent this should often be removed from pen to pen, and all stimulating food should be withdrawn. Do not be afraid to rid yourself of any wasters. They will only foul the ground, will overcrowd the others, and never in themselves be any good. Just as the removal of untidy weeds in a garden lets in light and air to the good plants, so will the removal of your weeds benefit the young stock remaining. In this "weeding out" some discretion must be observed, and if the experience of the breeder is not sufficient, then he should not hesitate to ask the assistance of friends. The lobes of cockerels develop much earlier than those of pullets, which often do not fully come out until the comb begins to grow. Spotted legs will oftentimes turn out dark. White in the flights is commonly seen, but

these white feathers generally moult out, and crooked or fallen combs may grow straight and upright. White in the face, sprigs on the comb, feathers on the legs, too many toes on the feet, and badly crooked breast bones never come right, and should condemn the owners to a speedy death.

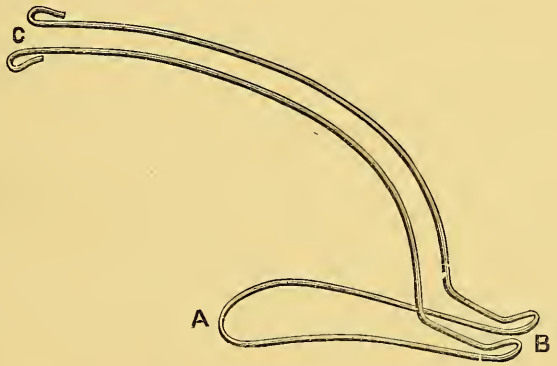
CHAPTER VIII.

EXHIBITING.

There are few birds more difficult to prepare for exhibition than a Minorca, especially a cockerel. The least fright seems to have a very appreciable effect upon the bird's nervous system, making a beautifully coloured face appear pale. The great idea must be to put the birds into the show pen in brilliant plumage, tame, but yet able to display their qualities. A well-known judge recently told me in conversation, that after considering the face, he always threw out bad coloured birds in the black breed, and all dirty or yellow birds in the white. If the owner is satisfied that his stock comes up to a fairly high standard of perfection, then he should select his best and prepare them for the show pen. This should not be left until a few days before the show, but should begin at least two or three weeks before that time. They will require extra food, extra attention and a considerable amount of training. To improve the brilliancy of the plumage, the soft food should be mixed with the liquor obtained by boiling whole linseed, and the best grain to use at this time is buckwheat, as it also helps to brighten the plumage. Peas, either as meal in the soft food, or whole if the birds will eat them, will be beneficial in hardening the feathers. Hemp seed may be given occasionally, and will be found useful in giving a deep red tinge to the comb, face and wattles. Sulphate of iron added to the drinking water will act as a tonic, but just a few drops of sulphuric acid should be added with it to prevent the bird sneezing and taking cold. Every day the bird should be put into a show pen and be gradually accustomed to his owner, or strangers approaching the pen. On these occasions it is well to give a small "tit bit," such as a morsel or two of meat, and to induce the bird to take it from the hand. By these means it will grow accustomed to persons, and will come to the front of the pen in expectation of receiving the usual favour. At these times, also, the owner should pass a stick between the bars

and along the bird's back, sometimes stroking the thighs and legs with it, and making him move round. Then when the judge comes to look it over at the show, the bird, instead of flying to the top of the pen, will come forward and display itself to the best advantage.

The day before sending off to the show it will be needful to make a few preparations of the toilet. The face, comb, lobe, wattles and legs should be washed with warm water and a little sponge or flannel. If the comb is slack in condition, that is, not stiff, it should be bathed for a few days with alum water, or vinegar and water. The finishing touches should be given just before dispatching them to the show; the comb, face and wattles should be lightly rubbed over with just a little camphorated oil, and the legs should be anointed with a *very little* vaseline to give them tone. If the birds are to be sent far from home they should have a good meal



of bread soaked in old ale, which will make them sleep and save them from fatigue on the journey. A proper hamper should always be provided, and this should be too large rather than too small. Above all, if the birds are not in good condition, do not send them out. It is simply courting failure. When the exhibit returns from the show it will need the same care and attention that it had before it went away. The excitement of the show and the fatigue of the journey will have upset the bird. It should not be returned to the run, but should be put in the training pen and fed for a day or so on soft food. Hens should be returned to the runs at night; they should be put upon the perch after the others have gone to roost. Cockerels should never be returned to their fellows, or they will fight and disfigure each other. If the comb should be slack it should be

bathed as previously recommended, and will soon return to its normal condition if the bird is kept in a cool place. If not, then it will be advisable to make use of a wire cradle, shaped like the illustration. They are very simple to make. It is best to use strong wire about as stout as an ordinary knitting needle. The point A is put on under the back of the comb, whilst at the point B it is tied in front of the comb. It is advisable to tie the bird's legs with a piece of tape for a few days until he has become accustomed to this, or he may scratch it off.

CHAPTER IX.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT.

There is a common notion around that it is a very easy matter to keep poultry so that they may be remunerative. Such, indeed, is the fact when one has the "knack," after having studied and found by experience what is necessary. Very many persons set up poultry keeping because they desire to have new laid eggs, perhaps for a sick or delicate member of their family. They remember that their father, grandfather, uncle or aunt kept poultry, and therefore *they* should know all about the way to treat them. There is no class of fowl that will give better results than Minorcas if they are properly handled. There are two great points to attend to in this matter, viz., regularity and judicious feeding. It is very important that the birds should be fed at regular times in the day. Some persons like to give the birds three meals a day, some think two are sufficient, whilst others give only one meal at night. Circumstances should regulate this point, for birds on a free range will not require so much food as those whose range is limited, and who have to be supplied with everything. As a general rule the following will be found sufficient for either case, varying the quantity according to requirements. In the morning a warm feed of soft meal, at noon a small quantity of meat, liver or flesh of some kind, and if cooped up a supply of green food. At night a good feed of sound hard corn. The owner must be careful not to be too liberal in this matter, for if his birds receive too much food they will get too fat, will not lay, and will probably fall ill or die. No actual quantity can be prescribed, but every care should be taken that whilst the birds get enough they should not be overfed, nor should they have more than they will clear up vigorously. A variety of grain should be arranged for, two or three days or a week upon wheat, then barley, then oats, buckwheat or dari, whilst occasionally as a treat may be given a little maize or hemp seed. If the weather be cold the morning meal may

be varied by giving a feed of corn which has been *boiled* for a few moments. Of course it should not be given to them too hot. If the birds are running free, their food should be scattered about for them to find, but if they are cooped the soft food should be given them in a trough. When the fowls are fed it is a good plan to induce them to feed out of the hand, thus making them tame. Whether the fowls be cooped or on a free run they will require a dust bath. For this purpose I do not think it advisable to use many sifted ashes for Minorcas. I have a notion that it has a tendency to injure the colour of the plumage, that is, to make the black rusty; I prefer finely sifted road dust, to which has been added a very little sulphur and lime. The bath should be put in a dry, sheltered, sunny corner, and should be large enough for several birds. Observers will have noticed that directly one bird begins a bath there are others which quickly do the same.

I do not think that in a work of this kind I should go into the construction of houses, and I will content myself with just calling attention to a few points, viz., ventilation, perches, nests, light, shelter and cleanliness. Ventilation is absolutely essential to the health of the stock, and absence of it is a certain forerunner of disease. It must be remembered that draughts are not required for ventilation. There should be a proper system, either by means of a window or by a movable board near the roof. Perches should be not so broad as to give the birds cramp, nor so narrow as to cause them to rest on the breast to prevent falling. They should not be placed too low that the birds cannot walk under them, nor too high that the cock's comb comes in contact with the roof when he crows—as he is sure to do—on the highest perch. Nor should they be so placed that the cold air from the door or ventilator will fall on them.

Nests should not be placed on the floor, but should be a foot or so from the ground, and of fair size. There should be a sufficient number that the hens can use them without quarrelling, and that there may be no necessity for several hens to get into one nest, to the danger of breaking the eggs. The nest boxes should be frequently cleaned out, and fresh straw or hay put in, for if their nests are dirty the fowls will not use them, but will lay the eggs about in odd corners of the house and runs. Light should be admitted into the roosting houses, and a large sheet of glass should be let into the side for this purpose. If the fowls have free range

they should be provided with shelter of some kind. This should be not only shelter from the rain, but from cold winds and hot sun.

" Cleanliness is next to godliness " we are told, and this is just as necessary in the case of our poultry as in our persons. The roosting house should be cleaned out at least once a week, and if the droppings could be cleared out every day or so all the better. Sanitas sawdust mixed with sifted ashes or sand makes a capital floor for this purpose, is easily raked over and kept clean.

The houses should be well lime-washed out once a quarter, and on these occasions the perches should be taken out. A small quantity of Jeyes' fluid or paraffin should be added to the wash to kill the insects. If these parasites are not kept down they will be a great annoyance to the fowls, and will spoil their plumage.

CHAPTER X.

THE MINORCA QUESTION.

A SPIRITED correspondence anent "The Minorca and its Fancy Points" took place in *The Stockkeeper* some few years since, and as the views then expressed by several of the best breeders of the day bear very forcibly on the matter, I have great pleasure in giving them *in extenso*.

The Minorca and its Fancy Points.

LETTER No. 1.

SIR,—The Minorca fowl, which, until only a few years since, was hardly seen out of Devon and Cornwall, has since then become so popular that they often outnumber a better known, if not so old a variety. The cause for this sudden popularity is not difficult to account for. In the West of England they had for years been bred and kept principally because they were found to be such marvellous layers of very large eggs. That they were also hardy, precocious, and a very handsome bird, easy to rear, the pullets commencing to lay at an earlier age than is the case with most other varieties. As these good properties became more widely known, so these birds were more extensively bred throughout the kingdom, and under the fostering care of a club, with a most energetic secretary at its head, they have continued to gain in popularity, and birds which a few years since could be purchased for a few shillings each are now worth as many pounds. Hundreds of Minorcas have also been sent to America and the Colonies, where their merits are being fully recognised, and the Minorca bids fair to become as great a favourite abroad as it is at the present time in the United Kingdom.

At most shows where a recognised judge of the variety officiates, the entries are very numerous, as many as thirty and even forty birds competing in one class. With such an entry, it is needless

to say the competition is very close, and the awards are keenly criticised, and one often hears a great diversity of opinions on some of the points of a Minorca. My object in addressing this letter to you is principally for the purpose of getting these matters more fully discussed, and, if possible, settled, that we may all know what to breed for and what to avoid, that the judges' decisions may be more consistent than has hitherto been the case.

All Minorca fanciers are of the opinion that white on the face is most objectionable, some even going so far as to say this should be a disqualification in an exhibition bird. Yet how many of such birds do we see winning prizes. Now, will Messrs. Pitts, Stafford, Hopkins, Parkhouse, Leighton, Dr. Paulin, and others kindly give their views, that judges may know what are the opinions of the leading breeders and exhibitors on this much-vexed question? I should also like these gentlemen, and others who I cannot remember just now, to state their opinions as to the size of the ears. The fashion seems to be to get the earlobes as large as possible. Why, I am at a loss to understand; I should much prefer to see these moderate in size, for large ears means, sooner or later, white on the face. Talking of the face reminds me that one often comes across birds at shows which have had many of the small feathers removed from the face. Now I do care for a gipsy face, or a face almost covered with black feathers. It is to be hoped that judges will in future, not only pay more attention in looking after white on the face, but pass or disqualify those which have been trimmed.

Next, I should like to make a few remarks about the combs of these birds. In my opinion these are far too large, both in the cocks and hens, and if something is not done to get these smaller I am certain these large combs will ruin the variety. Even as it is, many breeders cut off the combs of their breeding stock, as they find the birds do not properly fertilise their eggs. In other cases the cocks' combs have to be supported to keep them erect. When a variety requires this kind of attention they soon lose their popularity, and people who merely keep poultry for the sake of their eggs, or to add to the beauty and attractiveness of their homes, will not be bothered with birds requiring this attention, and giving so much trouble to keep in a presentable condition. In my opinion very big combs and large earlobes are not to be encouraged in Minorcas, or any other variety which is to continue a thoroughly popular breed.

Before concluding, there is another point I should like to see an opinion expressed about, and that is, as to the colour of the legs of these birds. Of late many otherwise excellent specimens have been very light in legs, some even of a blue, slatey colour, just the kind of legs which Spanish fanciers like to see on their birds, but which, to my mind, is most objectionable in Minorcas. I much prefer the dark-coloured legs, almost a black if you like, but not those pale ones which are becoming so common. If I remember rightly, at the last Palace show, Dr. Paulin exhibited some good birds with very dark legs, and the general opinion was that those were the coloured legs to be encouraged in Minorcas. Now Mr. Harwood is a very old fancier of Minorcas, and as he is frequently called upon to judge these birds, I hope he, as well as others, will be good enough to favour your readers with his opinion on the properties I have referred to, for I consider these are matters that require to be ventilated through the public press.

BLACKLEGS.

LETTER No. 2.

SIR,—A letter under the above heading, and signed "Blacklegs," in your issue of the 19th inst., opens up a subject of very great interest to all breeders and exhibitors of the black Minorca, and I hope to see many of the leading breeders of this variety giving their ideas as to what constitutes a perfect specimen; although I may state, for the information of those who are unaware of the fact, that the committee of the Minorca Club drew up a Minorca standard shortly after the formation of the club, a copy of which, I believe, was sent to all acknowledged poultry judges, some of whom have followed closely upon this standard. I regret to say there are others who have not done so. It is quite evident to me that your correspondent, "Blacklegs," has a very fair knowledge of a Minorca. He is perfectly right in saying that the Minorca is fast becoming as great a favourite abroad as it is in the United Kingdom. They have made wonderful strides during the past two years. Previous to the formation of the Minorca Club it was quite an exception to see a Minorca with a sound red face. Now, I am pleased to say, in the West of England especially, these white-faced specimens are almost extinct. And many of our leading fanciers have splendid birds of the correct type. But there are a large number who breed this beautiful variety who are not thoroughly conversant with the

whole of the points necessary to constitute a good specimen; and, I fear, even with those who know a good bird when they see it, failure is too often to be attributed to the want of knowledge in mating for the breeding pen, "birds being mated indiscriminately." I have proved this cannot be done to obtain satisfactory results.

Fearing I shall be trespassing too much upon your valuable space, I will at once proceed to answer the question asked by your correspondent, "Blacklegs." White on the face of a Minorca should be a fatal defect in the show pen.

As to earlobe, I am decidedly in favour of a medium sized lobe. Many have, in my opinion, far too large lobes, which certainly leads eventually to white in face in most instances. But I have proved with judicious mating it is possible to breed them with large lobe and still to retain the sound red face. I have now in my yard a cockerel with an immense lobe and one of the soundest and best faces I ever saw on a Minorca. I may add that such birds as these are most valuable to mate with hens deficient in lobe, although good in other points. I consider a medium-sized lobe of the proper almond shape of good quality and substance fitting closely to the face adds much to the beautiful appearance of the Minorca. A tight-fitting lobe is a point that should be carefully bred for. Many of the best specimens (otherwise) are spoilt by loose, unshapely lobes. Your correspondent states that he has often seen birds which have had the small feathers removed from their faces. This is a thing too often done. The judges, I am pleased to see, as a rule pass birds so treated. I certainly do not admire a gipsy face, although this is a kind of face that seldom shows white. I always avoid a Minorca that has a pale red face, as they invariably become white; a coral red is the correct colour.

I have always been a great advocate for medium-sized combs, especially on the cocks. I consider the hens should have fair size combs (not too large). It adds much to their beauty. Such combs should have sufficient substance so as to be carried off from the face. They should not be thin and flabby, falling loosely over the face and preventing the hen from seeing. Your correspondent also states that many breeders cut off the combs of their breeding stock. This is often done when a bird meets with an accident to its comb, which causes it to go over. I have at the present time three cocks in my breeding pens with their combs off (my challenge cup cock being one).

The correct colour of a Minorca's legs is very dark, the darker the better—black if possible. There is also another most important point too often overlooked, viz., size and shape of body. I have seen specimens at shows in the prize list only fit to breed Minorca Bantams. In those cases head points could have been the only thing considered necessary by the person who awarded the prizes. A large number of the Minorcas are narrow in chest, short in body, and tapered away too much towards the tail, tails also carried much too high. The latter is a most prevalent defect, and every endeavour should be made to breed it out. Tail should not be as full and fan-shaped as so often seen, should be neat and carried well away (not over the bird's back); lastly, the birds should be fairly well set up on legs, showing plenty of thigh.

April 26th, 1889. A. G. Pitts.

Letter No. 3.

Sir,—Although my name is not included in the list of the gentlemen whose opinions "Blacklegs" desires on this subject, I trust "Blacklegs" will pardon me for undertaking a duty for which, perhaps, I am not nearly as well adapted, and from which I would have withheld, had it not been that there is also another article in last week's Stock-Keeper, which even more than "Blacklegs'" letter calls my pen to paper. In the first place, Mr. Editor, I am astonished that you should have permitted—without correcting—such erroneous ideas to be published, as are contained in the anonymous article on "the Andalusian." I shall quote one or two of the most glaring mistakes: "Again, both the Andalusian and the Minorca are practically identical with the Spanish in style, shape, and size. Take away the white face, and the Spanish would become to all intents and purposes a good Minorca." Now, Mr. Editor, your correspondent is evidently far more in want of enlightenment on the subject of the points of the Minorca than "Blacklegs." If he is an authority on the Andalusian, why could he not have stuck to his subject and left the Minorca out of the question entirely, when to mention it only means the production of such errors as the above? I would commend the following to your contributor's notice, and I trust it will be the means of effectually ending any such erroneous ideas as were published last week.

The first point mentioned by "Blacklegs" is the much-vexed

question of white on the face. Now, to condemn this seems very like thrashing a dead dog. Surely this point is once and for all settled in this wise: that white on the face, in whatever quantity (although perhaps only *one speck*), should utterly condemn the bird for show purposes, and that the judge should pass over all birds so marked. At any rate, we have arrived at this length in Scotland, and surely England cannot be behind us in this respect. It simply means that if we ticket a bird with white in face we encourage the greatest defect which there can be in the Minorca. In my opinion the pure blood-red face is the making of the Minorca, and nothing blemishes the appearance of the bird so much as white on face. At Auchterarder Show, where there was a very large entry, I passed over five birds for this defect, and did not even go the length of looking at their other points from a judge's standpoint.

As to the other points, I must condense my remarks as much as possible, and I would only say that my idea of a Minorca is—face as free from hairs as possible (*trimmed faces always to be passed*), eyes *dark*, lobes large, but of a distinctly almond shape. As to the combs, this is a matter of personal opinion. I prefer combs as large as possible, provided that the general effect pleases the eye, and does not for a moment give one the idea of the comb being a deformity or even an inconvenience. If the structure of a cock's comb is correct it never requires support. What I mean by this is that the breadth at the base in a full-grown Minorca cockerel should not be less than one inch and three-quarters. If the breadth is this, there will not be the least necessity for a support, nor any possibility of the comb falling—except perhaps through injury. As to the colour of legs, old birds invariably get light, but those cannot be too dark in yearling birds—the darker the better. Still, if we give five points for a *black* leg in a pullet, we may also give five points for a dark *slate-coloured* leg in a hen, and still be acting justly.

Before closing I have to touch on the main point of interest to the writer of the article on "The Andalusian." In my opinion, a Minorca is not a Minorca when it resembles the Spanish in shape. I would class the Spanish as a sprightly, lanky, leggy fowl, while the correct type of the Minorca is as follows:—Let us have the legs of medium length, inclined to the short side; body deep and square; neck of medium length, but hackle very full and flowing, giving a Dorking-like shape at shoulder; *tail carried well back.*

Now, the first and the last point mentioned are the two which give the Minorca a very distinct appearance from that of the Spanish. If there is one thing more than another that I dislike it is a high tail or a Spanish type.

E. W. Grant-Govan.

Glengyle, Scotland.

Letter No. 4.

Sir,—Your Andalusian correspondent will somewhat rile Minorca fanciers. He says, in his article on the Andalusian, "take away the white in the face of a Spanish, a good Minorca will remain." He can manufacture the Andalusian any way to please himself, but, please, hands off our old pedigree red-faced Minorca. I have seen Anconas, which are Minorcas with plumage very much like Scotch Greys. I have also seen blues. I saw some very good ones twenty-four years ago in the yard of the late Mr. Leworthy, of Barnstaple, who was a great fancier of the Minorca. He told me they were sports from the Minorca, and some, he said, call them Andalusians. I venture to say hardly in any one point is a Spanish like a Minorca. Look at the chicken; can anything be more different? No other variety feathers so quickly as do Minorcas. Spanish are quite the reverse. Spanish have smooth combs, blue legs, green lustred plumage, and are altogether more stilty in appearance. Minorcas have rough combs, should be black in leg, plumage thicker and more fully furnished in tail and hackle, which is of a richer and finer quality, and glossy jet black, more compact and Dorking shaped, shorter on leg, and would be happy and jolly where a Spanish would starve and die. It is those fanciers who turn out these mongrels, that are neither Spanish, Andalusian, nor Minorca, which has caused so much difference in opinion of what a true Minorca should be.

In reply to "Blackleg," I may say I like the comb to be medium in size, so as not to cause any discomfort to the bird. Lobes are decidedly too big; they should not be so large when the bird is four or five years old. What I wish to see is birds improving with age, and not go all to pieces at their first moult. Most Minorca fanciers are working men, and the close confinement they are compelled to keep them in has a tendency to make the combs and lobes grow larger than otherwise would be the case if the birds had their liberty. A red face is the real standing point. The plumage should be a

glossy jet black, even to the quill feathers. Nothing adds more to a Minorca's beauty than a black beak, legs, and eyes. Old fanciers insisted on toe-nails being of a dark horn colour. If "Blackleg" breeds up to his writing he will do well. Nothing makes me feel more angry than when I see in the show-pen, when I have to judge, a good bird out of its natural state. You pass it, you have to state your reasons, and perhaps an angry wordy correspondence follows. On the other hand, give it the benefit of a doubt, then you are laughed at. I have made up my mind for the future to disqualify any that are unfairly dealt with.

Minorcas are a difficult bird to judge, as they vary every hour in appearance. Condition is the deciding point. All-round judges are not always to blame, for they often have 400 pens to judge in the time it should take to judge an average lot of Minorcas. Something is wrong when two breeders pass a bird at two different shows, while at a third an all-round judge gives him a first and challenge cup. All winners should be handled. Light legs and white in wing flights are much too prevalent; also crooked breast-bone—whether this is caused by going too soon to roost on perch, or whether it is hereditary, is difficult to say. I am inclined to think the latter. I should like breeders to pay more attention to bodily structure, as I would like the Minorca not only to look well, but handle well. Minorca fanciers are at last getting more enlightened as to what is the best standard, and I hope they will still be more determined to maintain the purity of our old red-faced Minorca.

J. Harwood.

Letter No. 5.

Sir,—I am inclined to think your correspondent, "Black Legs," is well aware of the fact that Minorca fanciers are all pretty well agreed what to breed for and what to avoid. He shows by his letter that he himself is well posted on the subject, and knows what to aim at too, and I am quite safe in saying that in no other variety do the fanciers generally come nearer to a universal agreement on show points than we do. This is to be attributed mainly to the well-directed action of our club, combined with the efforts of our most excellent hon. secretary, to whom "Black Legs" pays a well-deserved compliment. I believe "Black Legs" wrote his letter in the hope that the answers thereto would demonstrate this

fact—viz., that Minorca fanciers are remarkably well agreed on the fancy points of the breed, and doubtless such will be the case.

Mr. Pitts, Mr. Grant-Govan, and Mr. Harwood show clearly enough in their letters that there is no material divergence of opinion between themselves. These three gentlemen, and all other real fanciers, are agreed that white in face is, and shall continue to be, a fatal defect in the show pen. I am glad to see Mr. Grant-Govan's protest against the absurd statements of the writer of "The Andalusian" article, and I entirely agree with Mr. Grant-Govan's comments thereon. The Minorca is good enough of itself to stand alone without any outside help from any other variety whatever, but the Black Spanish comb, style, shape, and carriage would be the last thing a Minorca fancier would desire.

As regards ear-lobe, I have always believed that the fashion in vogue some time ago of extra large ear-lobes for Minorcas had much to do with introducing white-faced birds. I like a fair-sized lobe, pure white, without folds or creases, and fitting close to side of head.

Respecting size of comb, I am satisfied that this is merely a question of feeding, and many fanciers in their anxiety to get a bird into high show condition give too much stimulating food, which has the effect of producing the extra large combs we sometimes see, and sometimes to the detriment of the bird's success. "Black Legs" need have no fear of the general utility of the Minorca being spoiled in this respect. When Minorcas are kept as ordinary farmyard stock, not a bird among them is to be found which is inconvenienced in any way by too large a comb.

The legs of Minorcas as cockerels or pullets should be black or nearly so, but Mr. Grant-Govan rightly calls attention to the fact that after the first season the legs become lighter in colour, and this fact is not always either known or remembered by all-round judges and others.

Mr. Pitts is quite right in insisting upon Minorcas being large in size, and not mere Bantams. Anyone can breed pretty and small Minorcas, but to breed a *big good one* is not so easy, but when achieved will certainly meet with its due reward under all good judges of the variety. I like a Minorca with a big square body, and somewhat of a Dorking shape, only higher on the leg, in fact, a big substantial-looking fowl.

Now, as to judging, it is not sufficiently remembered that the Minorca is, as stated by Mr. Harwood, a very variable bird in

appearance hour by hour, and sometimes judges get blamed wrongfully from this cause, and the exhibitor is apt to overlook the fact that at time of judging his bird may not be looking its best, while another bird, no better in points, condition, or size may at time of judging just happen to show itself to the best advantage, and thus gain precedence. In conclusion, I venture to say that although the Minorca has so rapidly come to the front as everybody's bird, yet it seems likely to retain that enviable position for a long time to come.

A. Clegg.

Letter No. 6.

Sir,—Although not one of those named by your correspondent, "Black Legs," on this question, I see by your editorial that you wish for a thorough ventilation on this important subject, so I beg to join the list. Whoever "Black Legs" may be, whether a Minorca breeder or not, he seems to me to be moderately well posted, although there are several points he has overlooked, viz., condition, size, colour of eye, and plumage. First, as to white face, this should certainly mean an absolute disqualification. I do not mean by this to mark the pen with the objectionable word "disqualified," but that a judge should pass the same by without looking to its other good points. I am fast coming to the conclusion that not even a commended card should be placed on a pen possessing such a specimen, for how can a judge commend a white face bird which both by name and possession should be a red face one. The great difficulty with this point is to know a real white face bird from one that on being left quiet for a short space of time turns very pale, and directly it is a bit excited comes up to its true colour. In this instance an all-round judge may pass such a bird in its first stage, and "imagine the white," but having his attention called to the bird later on, when it had been aroused, he would to his sorrow find out his error. The only prevention for this and many other errors is that all birds worthy of a card should be handled. Real white invariably shows itself under and close to the eye, sometimes even the lids show this objectionable fault, and a single direct speck of such is sure to be fatal later on.

Lobe is a point that I do not at all recognise of such importance as the face. My impression is that the flat side of a small Brazil or shoe nut best answers the purpose for both size and shape of same,

and which should be fitted well into the face and not abutting or hanging loosely. In judging I should not discard a large lobe bird, providing he or she carried a sound face. Gipsy faces are of two kinds: the first almost a very dull dark red, so much as to be almost black; the other represents a capital red face, with numerous small hairs growing out from same. The first of these I have an objection to, because they look so dull and heavy about the head; the second I would much rather see absent. I should never pass a bird that only possessed this slight fault, because such an one will throw white to the dogs, and for breeding purposes oftentimes invaluable.

Eye should be dark, but there are very few about of that colour; red passes very well, but the first nails the card up.

In colour the old strains were sooty black, but I must say I like a tinge of green; it seems to give them a lustrous appearance, which dead black does not possess; but this point does not much matter so long as they are black. White wing flights seem very prevalent, and these should be at once put down. This, again, can only be seen by handling.

Breast bones should be straight. I cannot understand the defect of crooked breasts being caused through the perches, but rather think the same is hereditary; because, if not so, what about those heavier specimens, such as Dorkings, Plymouth Rocks, and notably the Game, most all breeding true to breast point.

Combs should be large. I think this should be the ideal of all Minorca fanciers. By this I do not maintain those great coarse flabby ones that one so often sees in the show pen, but a comb with a wide base, slightly pebbly to the touch, as if you were passing your hand over a piece of fine sand paper, carrying long and broad spikes, firmly set upright on male, and one cross over the beak and front of skull, and thence laying out, on the hen. I cannot admire a hen that carries a large comb directly over from the skull. It seems to make her all lopsided, and in going from you she will run against anything on her blind side, whereas if the comb, be it ever so heavy and well embedded, in doubling across the skull and beak before the cross or actual drop, has the effect of maintaining the bird's body on an equality. I trust on this comb question that all fanciers and breeders will see the necessity of maintaining this grand old point—viz., a good sound and large comb. Never mind a bit of anxiety now and then; keep up the pedigree.

Legs and feet were formerly slate colour, but I vote decidedly

for dark or black, especially in young birds. Black legs, like white plumage, show the effects of age and climate—the one to turn a bit light and the other slightly yellow. So aged birds on this point should be treated on the give-and-take principle, and not be thrown altogether out for such a defective point.

Size and shape is a great point in this variety. The first should average from 6lb. to 8lb.; after a larger one is an excessive gain. In shape not at all Spanish, but more after the Dorking, only a bit higher on leg, well showing its thighs, but not quite so square.

I now come to condition, which sums up the whole of the points (barring size, colour and legs in one), for from the lack of this every other point in a Minorca seems sadly to fail. They seem to be extremely sensitive to sudden changes, and their comb, face and lobe are greatly affected even in a day. A good bird lacking condition most often fails to win, while a bad one in good trim often succeeds. The comparison of a white face Spanish to a Minorca in your issue of April 10 by an "Andalusian Breeder" answers itself. He simply knows nothing about the West of England fowl.

J. Physick.

Letter No. 7.

Sir,—The letters which have appeared in the last two issues of the Stock-Keeper have been very interesting to myself, as I doubt not they have been to all Minorca fanciers. I am glad that the subject has received attention, for, though there has on the whole last season been but little to grumble at in the judging of this variety, there has been quite enough to do serious harm. My acquaintance with this breed began thirteen years ago, and in those days laying powers were not subordinated to fancy points. Improvements no doubt have been made in this as in all other breeds, but I do not think they have been altogether in a desirable direction. In breeding for show it should be the great aim to obtain a blood-red face entirely free from white. White in the face should be an absolute disqualification. I would much rather breed from a bird with a tinged lobe than from one with a white face. I regret I am unable to agree with Mr. Pitts, that previous to the formation of the Minorca Club in 1886, no good birds were found with sound red faces. I remember such, and I feel sure that the desire to produce birds with large, clear, white lobes has induced breeders to have

recourse to the Spanish blood to obtain it. This, in my opinion, has brought with it an alteration in the type of the bird, and may be noticed in the following ways I think :—

1. In the pure strain the comb and wattles are of a very rough texture, and as brilliant as those of the Langshan. On the other hand, those with a mixture of Spanish blood have smooth combs of a pale red colour. 2. The legs of pure-bred birds are of a glossy black colour, and, though they become paler with age, they seldom approach the slatey blue so prevalent at the present time. 3. The carriage of those with Spanish blood in them is more stilty than in the pure-bred ones. 4. In the crossed strains the shoulders and chest are narrower than in the pure-bred variety. I particularly noticed this fault during last season, several very big winners having it. 5. The plumage in the pure strains is more dense, and of a glossy black, whilst with the Spanish cross this colour becomes of a greenish hue, sometimes showing a chequered marking on the wing. I like to see a bird well "up," though not quite so "gamey" as some now are, broad in breast and shoulders, and not with legs too light, or with pale pink in the feet. The ear-lobes should be of medium size, and good almond shape; when too large the white gradually spreads from the base upwards; with it there generally comes a small white speck under the eye, and this quickly spreads to meet the ear-lobe. I do not care to see the ear-lobe fitting too tightly to the head—at least, not to look as if "plastered" below the face. In such specimens that I have seen with this point developed, the lobes seem to be rounder than usual, and certainly indicate to my mind an infusion of Hamburgh blood. At the same time, they should not hang loose and flabby. One of the greatest possible objects to aim at is size, plenty of bone, without coarseness.

Opinions seem to differ with regard to size of comb. Personally I like to see them fairly large—in the hen hanging well from the face, in the cock firmly set on the head, with a broad base, no thumb marks, hollows at the sides, or twists in front, and with deeply-cut spikes. Crooked breasts are far too common. In many cases I am convinced this is caused by in-breeding weakening the bird, but I am well aware that the most frequent cause of this is allowing the birds to roost too early on a narrow perch. In conclusion, I would urge all Minorca fanciers to join the club, and whether they do so or not, I would advise them to apply to the

Hon. Secretary, Mr. P. Stafford, for a copy of the club rules and standard. T. H. Harrison.

Letter No. 8.

Sir,—I do not know who your correspondent "Black Legs" is, but in my opinion he has an excellent idea of what a Minorca should be. I thank him for his kindly reference to myself, and also to the club. He asks me to give my views on several points which I am pleased to do, but I think they are pretty well known. I have now been a breeder and exhibitor of these birds for a good many years. I am delighted to see that it has now taken its proper place, and justly so, as one of the most useful and beautiful fowls we have; and I am also pleased that I have had my part in bringing it into the prominent position which it has now attained. It is without the slightest doubt the most popular breed at the present day, and the demand from America has increased to a very large extent, and continues to do so. I think it is not saying too much that it owes its popularity in the main to the Minorca Club, and the efforts its individual members have made on its behalf. I would ask you to go back with me to the last six Crystal Palace shows to see the great progress it has made—

In 1883, two classes, no special, entries 32.

In 1884, two classes, two cups, entries 69.

I thought it was time something more was done, so wrote Mr. Howard on the subject, with the result that in 1885 there were four classes, four cups, value £3 3s. each; the Palace Committee giving one, Mr. Wellings guaranteed one, and myself two; entries only two short of 100. One of the cups I was fortunate enough to win myself. In 1886 four classes only, two cups, but there was a fourth prize in the chicken classes; entries 88. I only sent five pens this year, while in 1885 I sent fifteen—just making the difference. In 1887, four classes, two cups; entries 121. In 1888 (the Minorca Club Show), six classes, two challenge cups value £15 15s. each, and three cups value £3 3s. each; entries 139. At Torquay Show in December, 1887, there were four classes, two cups; entries 136. And at the following shows, of which I happen to have the catalogues, in 1888-1889, I find Dairy 65, Gloucester 49, Windsor 44, Derby 111, Brighouse 49, Barnstaple 46, Tiverton 88, Torquay 111, Grantham 63, Bristol 54, Worcester 46, Liverpool 90 (58 hens in one class), and Glasgow 97. If shows will give

separate classes for Minorcas instead of having to compete against Andalusians, Leghorns, Spanish, &c., there is not the slightest doubt that they will fill and be large, if not the largest classes in the show. The Minorca Club, through its committee, has drawn up a "standard of perfection," which has been sent to all acknowledged poultry judges, and if there is anyone who would like to have a copy I shall be pleased to send him one. I enclose a copy of the "standard of perfection," and hope you will find room for it. It will give your readers a correct idea of what a Minorca should be.

And now for some of the points touched upon by "Black Legs." White in face.—According to the Standard, this is a fatal defect, and, however good otherwise, these birds ought to be passed. I do not mean pale or even blue-faced birds (the latter will become white in time), but to distinctly white-faced birds. Too much cannot be made of this. They are "red-faced" Minorcas, or should be. As to size of ear-lobe—medium in size, almond-shaped, fitting close to the head. If you have very large-lobed birds, sooner or later they will be white in face. I quite agree with "Black Legs" as to "trimming the face," and hope that judges will not hesitate to pass or disqualify if they find that it has been done. There is a great deal too much of it. As to combs, I do not like too large a comb; I like the birds to be able to carry them with comfort. Too large combs and earlobes are, as "Black Legs" says, "not to be encouraged." Legs should be black. Dr. Paulin's birds at the last Palace Show were, as "Black Legs" says, a capital colour; the darker you can get them the better. I quite agree with Mr. Pitts as to size and carriage. The more these matters are discussed the better. On behalf of my Club, I thank "Black Legs" for starting this correspondence, and for his capital letter. I shall be glad to hear from anyone wishing to join the club, and to give them full particulars.

PERCY STAFFORD,

Elmsleigh Hall, Leicester. *Hon. Sec., Minorca Club.*

MINORCA STANDARD OF PERFECTION.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

COCK.

Beak.—Fairly long, but stout.

Head.—Long and broad, so as to carry comb quite erect.

Comb.—Single, large, evenly serrated, perfectly upright, firmly set on head, straight in front, free from any twist or thumb mark,

reaching well to the back of the head, moderately rough in texture, free from any side sprigs.

Wattles.—Long, rounded at the ends.

Face.—Fine in quality, as free from feathers or hairs as possible, and not showing any white.

Ear-lobe.—Medium in size, almond-shaped, smooth, flat, fitting close to the head.

Eye.—Full, bright and expressive.

Neck.—Long, nicely arched, with flowing hackle.

Body.—Broad at shoulder, square and compact.

Back.—Broad and rather long.

Wings.—Moderate in length, neat, and fitting close to body.

Breast.—Full and rounded.

Thighs, Legs and Feet.—Medium length and stout.

Toes.—Four.

Tail.—Full, sickles long, well arched, and carried well back.

Size.—Large.

Carriage.—Upright, graceful.

Weight.—From 5½lbs. to 8lbs.

HEN.

Beak.—Fairly long, but stout.

Head.—Long and broad.

Comb.—Single, fairly large, evenly serrated, arched, drooping well down over side of face, slightly rough in texture, free from any side sprigs.

Wattles.—Long, rounded at the ends.

Face.—Fine in quality, as free from feathers or hairs as possible, and not showing any white.

Ear-lobe.—Medium in size, almond-shaped, smooth, flat, fitting close to the head, rather more rounded than in cock.

Eye.—Full, bright and expressive.

Neck.—Long, nicely arched.

Body.—Broad at shoulder, square and compact.

Back.—Broad and rather long.

Wings.—Moderate in length, neat and fitting close to body.

Breast.—Full and rounded.

Thighs, Legs and Feet.—Medium length and stout.

Toes.—Four.

Tail.—Full, neat, carried well back.

Size.—Large.
Carriage.—Upright, graceful.
Weight.—From 5lbs. to 6½lbs.

COLOUR OF BLACK MINORCAS.

COCK AND HEN.

Beak.—Dark horn colour.
Eye.—Dark.
Comb, Face and Wattles.—Dark blood red.
Ear-lobe.—Pure white.
Legs.—Black, or very dark slate.
Plumage.—Glossy black.

COLOUR OF WHITE MINORCAS.

Beak.—White.
Eye.—Red.
Comb, Face, Wattle.—Blood red.
Earlobe.—Pure white.
Legs.—Pinky white.
Plumage.—Glossy white.

VALUE OF DEFECTS IN JUDGING MINORCAS.

	Points.
Defects in face—bloated red, coarseness, or too hairy	15
Bad shape, or twisted comb	15
Want of size	15
Wrinkled, folded, or stained lobe	10
Defects in colour	10
Want of condition	10
Want of style and symmetry	10
Too light legs, eyes, or beak	8
Crooked breastbone	7
	100

A perfect bird to count 100 points.

Fatal Defects.—White in face; wry or squirrel-tailed; feathers on legs; other than single-combed; coloured plumage, other than black or white in the several varieties; other than four toes; legs other colour than black or slate in black Minorcas, or white in white Minorcas.

Letter No. 9.

Sir,—My name having been mentioned by "Black Legs" in your valuable paper of the 19th as to points, etc., of black Minorcas, I beg to say that I can only ask them to refer back to Mr. E. W.

Grant Govan and Mr. A. G. Pitts's letters in your issue of the 26th, in reference to the same. I think them as good a description of the breed all round as I have ever seen published in the press, and it has been discussed many times by both members of the Minorca Club and others. I believe that 80 per cent. of the breeders and exhibitors of this variety know perfectly well that Minorcas are nothing like the type of a white-faced Spanish. Yet I am sorry to find that many birds win at shows that are of the Spanish type, but I find now they are getting passed by the majority of judges on that account. My opinion of the Minorca is that the cock should have a medium-sized comb (not extra large, otherwise it will not produce fertility), eye dark, beak horn-shaped and black, lobe medium in size and almond shape, face a coral red, not too long on the leg, but showing plenty of thigh and bone, and square and compact, with neither whip-tail nor yet too high, legs dark. But above all, I should never despise a bird for being light in the leg, as most birds when they have their run in the fields among plenty of grass go light when about twelve months old. Although all younger birds should have black legs, I have seen birds in the show pen that have had their legs coloured, so on that account I should not give five points between a black leg and a light one, particularly if it has to continue a farmer's fowl.

In the hen, I like to see her with a good large comb. When they have their liberty it shows good blood; and I think it is mostly known and admired on that account. But the comb should have plenty of substance to carry it arch-shaped, and not to prevent her from seeing her way, which is the most important point. Eye dark, beak horn shape, lobe almond shape, of a medium size, face coral red, with as few hairs on as possible, and, above all, let them be large and square in compact (not a black Hamburgh body), nor yet long on the leg. The above is my opinion of Minorcas, and I give it with pleasure for the information of your readers for what it is worth. There are many older fanciers of this bird who might differ from me in many points.

Preston. WM. LEIGHTON.

LETTER No. 10.

SIR,—I have read the various letters that have appeared in your late issues, and cannot allow the subject to drop without adding my humble "crow." I do not wish to enter into the merits or demerits

of the letters, but at once give you my opinion of what I think goes to enhance and make up a fancy Minorca. White in face is doomed in Scotland, and every fancier who has a reputation to lose should not allow a white-faced bird to have a place in his breeding pens —no matter how good in other points. A fault, I observe, with some breeders is the attempt to put "stilts" underneath the Minorca. I like to hit the happy medium—between a Dorking and the present everyday exhibition Spanish. I like dark legs, but they invariably get lighter after the first moult, which is quite a natural sequence, and one can easily tell an old from a young bird in a mixed class. I do not like to see a hen going "shooting" about from place to place. This is caused by the comb hanging flat over side of face. Nor do I like to see the fold in front of head. The comb, in my opinion, should rise right from the base of head and gently curve over to one side, allowing the bird to see ahead with both eyes. If the comb does this, let it be large, as a large comb is a very distinctive mark in a Minorca. Lobes to the small side suit my liking, and fitting close and distinct. Lobes running into face I do not like. Plumage glossy jet black, and tail carried well back. But I regret to see birds when two or more years old they incline to carry their tails high.

We, in Scotland, are pegging away, and are making rapid strides. The Scottish Minorca Club is working a world of good, and I am pleased to inform you we are "aye flourishing," and will be glad to add any Scottish fanciers to our roll. As Mr. Stafford pointed out in his letter, our first show had ninety-seven entries, in four classes, and our future looks very bright. I am afraid if we breed too much for fancy points we may tend to lose the more essential—viz., egg production. A word of warning may not be out of place in the present discussion.

Hoping still to see further letters, and at the close please let us have your opinion.

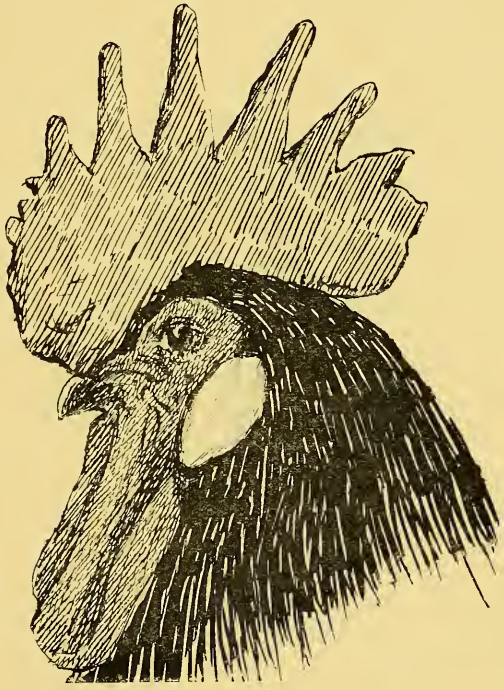
James A. G. Dippie,
Hon. Sec., Scottish Minorca Club.

Coatbridge.

Letter No. 11.

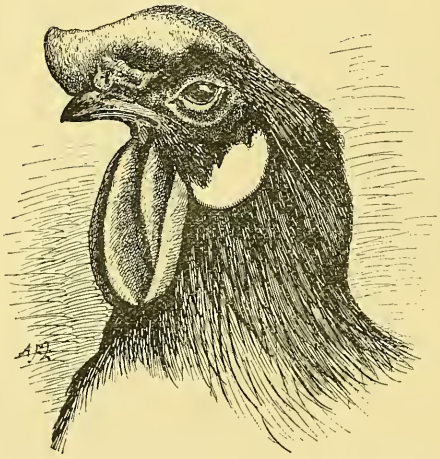
Sir,—The readers of the Stock-Keeper must have read with pleasure and profit the instructive and most interesting series of letters which have appeared for some weeks past on the Minorca.

All the writers have so readily and in such a disinterested manner expressed their opinions, that not only those who have taken part in the discussion, but others, must feel gratified that "Blacklegs" should have ventilated the subject. Having been frequently called upon to judge these birds when on many occasions the entries in a single class have numbered thirty or forty, and at Liverpool nearly sixty pens were submitted to my judgment, it may not be considered presumptuous if I briefly give my views on a few of the points referred to in the correspondence.



First of all, let me say I fully endorse Mr. Harwood's remark when he says, "Minorcas are difficult birds to judge." Only those who have had to judge them know how suddenly they alter in appearance, and the still greater difficulty experienced when they are not placed in a good light, as unfortunately is often the case. I have had to judge these birds—and others have had similar experience—when it has been necessary to be accompanied by a couple of attendants with lamps, to enable one to see the birds. I merely

mention this that exhibitors may realise the fact that judging under such unfavourable conditions may account for the apparent inconsistencies which occasionally occur in the decisions. Everyone who knows the Minorca can fully testify as to its useful properties as well as its beauties. It is a most striking variety, and when exhibited—as should always be the case—in the best possible condition and bloom, few others can surpass it either for beauty or attractiveness. Condition is of the utmost importance with Minorcas, and I cannot too strongly impress upon exhibitors of these birds the necessity of sending out their birds in the best possible feather and condition; otherwise it is a mere waste of money and time in exhibiting them.



In my opinion many of the combs are far too large, and I have frequently come across birds with combs which I know must have been kept erect by artificial means. Occasionally, these combs may be gradually seen falling over after the birds have been some time in the show pen. I prefer to see the comb spring from the beak without any twist or fold. The broader the comb is at the base, and the more firmly it is attached to the head, the better. To my mind any fold on the front is objectionable, and sooner or later will prove a weakness to the erectness and stability of the comb. Starting from the front of the beak, the comb should come well over on to the back of the neck, boldly serrated, and rough in texture. I do not care for those smooth shiny combs, as these we look for in

Spanish. As to the shape of the comb, I think the accompanying illustration of the head of one of Mr. Percy Stafford's cockerels gives a very good idea of what is wanted. The head of the hen is also very good, and probably will be recognised by many Minorca exhibitors as that of a well-known winner. To my mind the way she carries her comb is the correct one, while her lobe is about the size wanted, and of the proper shape.

I am glad to find there is almost a unanimity of opinion regarding the size of the ears. There can be no denying the fact that there has been a desire to get the ears as large as possible, and to obtain this point recourse has been had to other breeds, with the result that white in the face and smooth combs were at one time very common. These blemishes are gradually disappearing, and I think before long white in the face of a Minorca will be a thing of the past. To breeders I would say, Give up striving after big earlobes, but rather endeavour to reduce their size as well as the size of the comb. With age and frequent exhibiting, it will be found that combs and ears will get quite big enough by the end of the first season. What I should like to call attention to is the size and shape of these birds. With these, as with other breeds, in-and-in breeding has been continued too long for the purpose of obtaining certain properties, at the sacrifice of size and constitution. The Minorca should be a large-bodied and vigorous bird, full of life and activity, with a rich glossy black plumage, and black legs. But instead of this, how often do they appear listless, and small in body, and in shape and carriage more like Spanish—pretty to look at, but certainly not Minorcas.

From what I hear I shall be greatly disappointed if the classes for Minorcas are not better filled this year than was the case last season, for an unusually large number of chickens have been hatched. The demand for these birds for exportation is also very great, showing that the popularity of the Minorca is still increasing.

W. J. Nichols.

Letter No. 12.

Sir,—I, among others, have read with very great interest the correspondence that has recently appeared in your columns upon the above subject, and may say that on the whole I quite agree with most of the letters which have appeared from prominent Minorca

fanciers. However, I should like to make a few remarks upon them. In the first place, I think all must have been struck with the almost perfect unanimity of opinion which exists among leading fanciers as to what is the "correct type." Now, Sir, it is all very well for exhibitors to be agreed as to what points to breed for, &c. But how often do we find the judges upsetting all their calculations when the cards are distributed. I say distributed; and it is literally true, for had the cards been distributed by an inexperienced person, they would have been as well placed as was the case at some shows held in the North of England.

It is very discouraging to an exhibitor when he sends a grand all-round bird to a show, to see it put down, and the prizes given to birds with nothing to recommend them, except in some cases a big, striking lobe, and in others a massive, beefy comb, with scarcely another good point about them. I have been served so myself, and experience has taught me that if I send a bird with some extravagant points about it, it generally comes back with a prize (under some judges), and I am bound to admit that I have received prizes for birds which, had I been judging, I should have placed lower down the list.

If judges would study the "standard" published by the Minorca Club, and judge accordingly, we should soon have done with white in face, and get a better class of Minorcas generally. The remedy, in my opinion, rests with the judges in a great measure, and if some of them would favour us with their opinions in these columns as to what constitutes a good Minorca, I think this discussion will have done much to popularise and purify one of the most useful breeds of poultry. In conclusion, I may say that, whilst endorsing the remarks of previous correspondents, I think more might be said about the face of a Minorca, which, in my opinion, should be pure coral red, large and flat or level dark eye, and as little hair as possible, with plenty of red showing behind the ear.

W. E. Garlick.

Letter No. 13.

Sir,—I have read with great interest the letters which have appeared in your last three issues, and I trust you will allow me to give your readers a little of my experience. I have been a breeder of Minorcas for twenty-six years, and knew a little about them some eight years earlier, when a boy being constantly with an uncle who

kept them on a small farm for laying purposes. The Minorca must have been thought little of at that time, as I well remember coming with him to Bristol for a sitting of eggs, for which he was charged four shillings per thirteen. I cannot, therefore, agree with your correspondent, "Black Legs," when he says they were scarcely seen out of Devon and Cornwall until a few years since. I have been an exhibitor for the past sixteen years. I first exhibited two hens at the Bath and West of England Show held at Bristol. The *Live Stock Journal* said they were the grandest pair of Minorcas they had seen.

My experience being of a rather long duration, I am of opinion your Andalusian correspondent knows very little of what a Minorca should be, and I am sure it would take him all his time to manufacture a Spanish into a good Minorca, as they are so different in size, carriage and colour. I have seen some of these manufactured white-faced mongrels in the show pen, and they have won through judges recognising large lobes and sacrificing the essential point of a red face. These birds have been sold and bred from by people not knowing what a Minorca should be. In this way so many white-faced birds have appeared in the show pens of late. The lobe was a minor point. Large bodies and combs were the chief points looked for some years ago, but as large lobes and small bodies became fashionable, so the old type of a Minorca almost disappeared; but I am pleased to see the correct type is fast coming to the front again. To breed large birds is not so easy, especially when kept in confinement; but birds with large combs, sound face, and medium-sized lobes, will be sure to come to the front under an experienced judge. Chickens grow much faster on grass runs. I breed most of my winning birds in small runs, so it is not altogether an impossibility to produce winners in limited spaces.

A change has taken place since the formation of our club. Some show committees have appointed special judges for this variety, and they have been well rewarded with good entries, and I hope all committees will follow the same example. Still, I must beg to differ with Mr. Pitts when he says previous to the Minorca Club it was quite an exception to see a Minorca with a sound red face. I think it would have been an exception to see one with white in face some eight or nine years ago. I quite agree with Mr. Harwood when he says Minorcas alter very much in appearance in an hour or two. I think some of this is due to fanciers overfeeding and keeping them

in warm houses before going to shows. I quite agree with the remarks that all winners should be handled. White in flights should not appear after they have shed the whole of their wing flights. Here let me say a word to young beginners, not to be alarmed on seeing light feathers in their chickens, as these will disappear when they moult, if bred from a good strain. They are all when hatched more or less yellow tinged on tip of wings and under throat.

I can fully endorse the remarks of Messrs. Pitts, Harwood, Clegg, Harrison and all true Minorca fanciers, who are of opinion that a Minorca should have a large, square body, cock's comb medium size, well arched, sound face, medium size, almond-shaped lobe, fitting tight to face. I like to see a large comb on a hen when it is well carried, thick at base, curving a little over bill that the bird may see, and not be inconvenienced throught it. Legs should be black, but they get lighter after the bird is twelve months old. This should be taken into consideration when young and old birds compete together.

F. L. Chappell.

Letter No. 14.

Sir,—It has afforded me a certain amount of pleasure in following from week to week the different opinions expressed by the writers on the above subject, viz., "The Minorca and its Fancy Points." I was very pleased indeed to find this week that Mr. W. J. Nichols had given us his opinion, and I trust most of our judges who are called on to judge Minorcas will express their views through the medium of your paper, and say whether they will side with Minorca fanciers in making white in the face a disqualification, as it is no use saying white in the face will disqualify if the judges hold a different view on the subject; and another point I should like their opinion on is birds with crooked breasts. Now, I must say that I, for one, do not believe in the perch being the sole cause of this defect. If so, some birds I have handled must roost on very peculiar shaped perches indeed. The cause really lies in too close in-breeding, which not only causes crooked breast, but makes the bird delicate and small in body. This in-and-in-breeding should be avoided.

There is no doubt in my mind but that a great many fanciers who saw some of the cockerels exhibited last show season were

rather puzzled to tell where they inherited their tremendous large lobes from, if not from the Spanish. I like to see a nice medium-sized lobe, it shows quality, but not one nearly the size of an egg. If you have a bird with a very large lobe he soon begins to get mouldy in face after he is twelve months old, if not before.

It will be one of the best things that ever happened for the Minorca if this discussion should be the means of stamping out white in face, as nothing, to my mind, is more vexing than to find a bird which you have been building your hopes on, begin to show specks of white in face. There seems to be a difference about the size of the comb. Some like a large comb; others prefer a small one. I like to see a good-sized comb on a bird (not too large), set well back from the front of the beak (if the front of the comb comes in line with the bird's nostrils, that is plenty far enough), well stayed along each side of the head, a good firm base, free from all hollows, creases, or thumb marks, evenly and boldly serrated, the largest spike in the middle, reaching well back over the head, not too close on the neck, but just showing a little daylight between. And I like to see a comb with a nice finish to it, also beady in texture. The head should be broad and long, as it enables the bird to carry his comb well. Face a pure coral red, not the black-red face smothered in feather, but, as the standard of perfection puts it, as free from hairs and feathers as possible. I like a bird with a good large face, both deep and long, the eye large and full, dark in colour, lobe medium in size. A cockerel with a lobe the size of the one given in your last issue is plenty large enough. Let the lobe be of a nice smooth quality and texture, and fitting close to the face, not puckering out, the gills or wattles broad, medium in length, to correspond with the comb, and free from creases, beak broad and strong, black in colour, body as large as you can possibly get them, the larger the better, showing a good chest, wings well up, carriage of body almost horizontal, tail carried well back, with good long sickles and plenty of furnishing or secondary feathers, well up on the legs as a cockerel (he won't be too stilty when he gets older), showing plenty of thigh; legs black. As several writers have said, the legs get much lighter with age. Let the body of the bird be evenly balanced on his legs; also the legs be well apart, and not knock-kneed. Colour of plumage a rich glossy black, and plenty of hackle feather. In conclusion, I hope all breeders and exhibitors of Minorcas will do their utmost to stamp out the defects

which have been mentioned by the several writers on "The Minorca and its Fancy Points," by not having any birds with white in the face in their breeding pens; I also hope Mr. Nichols, as vice-president of the Minorca Club, will do the same. I trust he will do his utmost to get his brother judges to give us their views on the matter in the Stock-Keeper. I think the thanks of all Minorca fanciers are due to you for the kind manner in which you have thrown open your columns for the ventilation of the above subject.

Bristol. W. J. Amesbury.

Letter No. 15.

Sir,—I think it's now time "Black Legs" threw off his scales and came out in his true colour; at any rate, both he and your numerous readers must have derived a deal of pleasure and profit through the discussion on this subject. No one can deny after this but that Minorca fanciers are a genial lot of fellows. Every letter has been couched in terms endeavouring to bring their fancy to that which it formerly was, a bird both in name and possession, "Red-face Minorca."

The Minorca in my time has passed through many vicissitudes, viz., from red faces to white, large combs to small, small lobes to large, and slate or horn-coloured legs to black. Respecting the first of these, it's an undoubted fact that, previous to 1881, Minorcas were bred true as regards face. In 1879, at the Bath and West of England Show held at Exeter, thence Devonport, Crediton, Yeovil, Torquay, Launceston, and numerous others, I do not remember ever seeing a white-face bird. In 1882 this objectionable point began to make itself manifest, and so it continued to grow until 1886, when at Tiverton Show the judge, Mr. Harwood, put his foot down and threw out all with this objectionable point, and again followed up the same line of action at the Minorca Club Show at Bristol, 1888, since which time steady progress has again been made in the right direction. By the bye, it's a good thing for my esteemed friend, Mr. Pitts, that Mr. Roscorla's voice is silent in the watery deep, and that Jimmy Dole is out of the Minorca fancy, or I am sure they would both raise their voice against his idea that "white faces" were always prominent previous to the formation of the Minorca Club.

Large, sound combs were the order of the day when I first knew them, and rightly so; a Minorca is only known by such, and I am

pleased to see so many of your writers maintain this point. But with all my liking for this point, I must beg to differ with Mr. Grant Govan when he says the breadth at base of a full-grown Minorca cock should not be less than $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch. Of the thousands I have bred and seen I have never as yet come across such a one. An inch at base with a good front is full foundation to carry the largest comb ever seen. Large handsome combs are certainly more difficult to produce (with the necessary carriage), than small ones, but this difficulty can generally be overcome by judicious mating. Small combs are tantamount to large lobes, the first leading to the smooth and sickly Spanish, the second to the same end in white-face. Small, long lobes were formerly the order, but about the same date as red-faces disappeared large lobes came into existence. I always maintain that a large pure white lobe centred in the midst of a good red-face, comb, and wattle adds greatly to the beauty of the specimen. It is like the finishing touch to the painter's art; but if large lobes cannot be produced without detracting from the face, dispose of same at once; but I must here follow Mr. Pitts, that such by careful mating can be produced. It was the sudden change from small lobe to large that caused the white face; such a decided alteration cannot be effected in a year or so without detriment to other points. Undoubtedly Mr. Dixon is responsible for this large lobe craze, and Mr. Harwood for retaining the red face, so both the one incidentally and the other in reality have led to the present production of birds such as have never been seen before, viz., a good red face with a pure white large lobe.

Legs and feet were previously dark slate or horn-colour. Certainly dark (or, as some of your writers say, black), adds to and improves a black Minorca; the same seem to follow and be in accordance with their lustrous black plumage. All writers seem to agree that as the bird ages the legs have a natural tendency to become light, and I maintain with Mr. Leighton that birds constantly running in grass will produce like results, the constant moisture seeming to bleach them. There seems to me a much more objectionable point very prevalent, viz., decided signs of magenta red running over feet and up the shanks, which one should endeavour to rid them of; I wonder if there is in this country a three-year or even a two-year-old cock or hen with perfectly black legs and feet.

Again, legs were formerly short; with a large, square body

almost on the ground; they have recently risen higher and higher. I admire a Minorca that well shows its thighs, but I cannot have them placed on stilts. I remember seeing last year at Tiverton a bird in the selling class that could take a grain off a three-foot table; happily same was passed, or Spratts would have to raise their pens. Size is again gradually gaining ground. Let us have a long, straight keel. To show how much this point is dwelt on by our American cousins, in 1887 I had one of them visit me for whites, and no matter how good their other points were, no crooked breasts would do for him, and he was simply surprised that we did not dwell on same more in this country.

I always look back with pleasure on the points of a Minorca, to the originator of my stock, viz., the late Mr. Prin, of Exeter, one of the best old fanciers of his day. Big red faces, to extend over and around the deaf-ear; large combs; bulky bodies from 8lb. to 10lb.; rich, glossy black plumage, with ample feathers in hackle and saddle, and long flowing in tail was his delight. I have now in my possession two tail feathers from his stock that formerly measured 23½ inches from quill to tip, but from keeping are now reduced to 22 inches.

J. Physick.

Letter No. 16.

Sir,—I am more than satisfied with the result of my letter respecting the Minorca. It has called forth such a consensus of opinion respecting the questions I raised that I trust our judges in future will not think that a Minorca is only to be judged by the size of its lobes, its comb, and its legginess. All your correspondents have expressed the strongest objection as to white on the face. This is an absolute disqualification, and no bird with such a blemish should ever be seen in the money. Judges now know the feelings of many of the leading breeders and exhibitors, and I hope they will in future carefully look into the faces of these birds, and if they find any white then to pass such specimens. It is the wish of, I think, every breeder; if not, I hope those who are in favour of white faces will at once say so, otherwise it may be taken for granted that all object to this, and will not tolerate such birds. It has to be stamped out, and the sooner it is done the better.

Most of the writers prefer small lobes and moderate-sized combs. This, I am pleased to find, is the case, for, as I said, the desire to

get large lobes must ultimately lead to white faces. Combs, with age and frequent exhibiting, will get quite big enough and shaky too, so pray do not let us go in for the monstrosities seen during the last few years. Rough in texture by all means, and firmly attached to the skull, but moderate in size in both sexes, is what breeders should aim to produce and judges encourage as much as possible. Body as large as can be obtained, full and broad at the breast, with a flowing tail, not carried high; legs—well, I must confess I do like to see them a little high on the legs, especially when young, for we do not want to see a Minorca of the shape of a Dorking. The former is more active and sprightly than the Dorking, and, to my mind, a more graceful bird. In the colour of their plumage I like the feathers to be of deep black glossy colour, and, if possible, free from a purple tinge, as is too often the case. Legs as dark as they can be got, black preferred, for, as your correspondents very justly remark, these get lighter with age.

One question has cropped up which I certainly had not thought of, for during the years that I have bred Minorcas I so seldom have had birds with crooked breasts that hitherto I have paid very little attention to this. I can, however, easily understand that when in-and-in breeding has been carried on too closely, the stamina and size of the birds must deteriorate. But to imagine that crooked breasts result from the birds roosting on narrow perches or on the branches of trees, is a delusion. Give the birds a perch they can grasp, and the feet naturally and tightly close around this, but with a broad perch they cannot do so. Crooked breasts are seldom met with in any variety of wild birds, yet they roost on trees from the time they are able to fly. Whether Minorcas, any more than Dorkings, with crooked breasts should be thrown out of the prize-list is a most important question, and I hardly like to express any decided opinion on the subject. It, however, seems to me that it would be rather unfair to pass such birds solely for this fault, for it should be remembered the Minorca is not a table fowl like the Dorking, and yet how many of the latter, with any but straight breasts, win in the keenest competition and under the most competent judges. Such being the case, I do not expect to find judges passing Minorcas simply because they are not straight in the breast.

In conclusion, I may say I was aware that a standard had been issued by the club, but it seemed to me that although such a standard has been drawn up and recognised, yet some judges appear

to ignore this. But I hope, now that attention has been called to the subject in your columns, we shall in future see the awards made more consistently, and in accordance with the standard. To all of your correspondents I tender my best thanks for the consideration shown to me, and for the ready and courteous manner in which they have given their views. Most valuable and practical information has been obtained, which will prove useful to many. Although invited to come out of my shell I still prefer to be known as

"BLACKLEGS."

Paper read before the Members of the Birmingham and Mid-England Poultry Society, by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. JOHN SNELL, *on April 2nd,* 1890.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The subject of my paper to you this evening "The Minorca," is one that at the present time carries with it no little interest, and, I might say, an almost unprecedented enthusiasm and ambition amongst the many admirers and breeders of this now far-famed variety. The task might well have fallen on a more experienced fancier than myself, and I therefore ask your kind indulgence while I endeavour, to the best of my ability, to make my subject as interesting and instructive as possible. I shall not be far wrong in asserting that the rapid strides made by the Minorca during the past few years is almost without a parallel in the history of our feathered tribes. It is not confined alone to this country; our neighbours across the "herring pond," and on the Continent, have taken a great fancy to them, and we are continually hearing of large consignments being forwarded to almost every quarter of the globe. I attribute a great measure of this success to the efforts of the Minorca Club. That the club is doing a good work, and carrying out the object for which the society was formed is apparent, and the club deserves the heartiest support of the Minorca breeders of this country. The large classes seen at shows testify to their advancement, and I trust the future may still further enhance their claim to rank among our leading varieties.

The home of the Minorca in this country may justly be claimed by the south-western counties of England, where they are largely bred, irrespective of show points, to supply eggs for market purposes. During a recent visit through Cornwall I was much struck by the great numbers I saw at almost every homestead. As layers they are perhaps unequalled, certainly not surpassed, by any other

variety. During the many years I have kept them I have had many exceptionally good layers, and others just the reverse. Their eggs, as a rule, are large and perfectly white. I have a hen in my possession, now laying her fifth season, that has been a marvel at her work. Last year within a fortnight she contributed as her mite five eggs that weighed 25oz. I presented one to a member of this society, and he informed me it was the largest he had ever seen. They were, of course, double-yoked, but were perfect in shape, and well shelled. A dozen eggs from my breeding-pen in January last weighed 30½oz. Minorcas are non-sitters, although they have been known to sit and rear their young. They, however, can rarely be depended upon. They are very hardy, and good foragers. Their disposition is lively, and it is a treat to see a flock foraging in the field, their lustrous black plumage and rich, red combs, contrasted so conspicuously by their white ear-lobes, rendering them objects of great admiration. I have found them only moderate eaters compared with other breeds I have kept. With free range a flock can be well fed and maintained in good condition at about one penny per head per week. They can scarcely be placed in the category of a good table-fowl, yet in the hands of an experienced cook we have found them not to be ignored in this respect. They are small in bone, flesh exceedingly fine, of good flavour, and beautifully white. As a fancier's variety good birds are in great demand, generally realising a price that a few years since would be thought exorbitant.

It has occurred to me that from some cause their size is sadly on the wane; whether we may attribute this to in-breeding, over-stimulating foods, or other causes, I must leave to others more experienced and competent than myself in these matters. Size, together with a sound red face is a sure foundation to work upon; I do not say they are the only points to be considered, but I do contend they are the primary ones; we cannot, however, ignore the fact that while we have lost in size, we have made great headway in style. The coloured illustration issued some time ago of a pair of black Minorcas, the property of Mr. A. G. Pitts, of Highbridge, and engraved by our president, Mr. J. W. Ludlow, has been considered by many a good example. A later illustration, which appeared in the Stock-Keeper a few weeks since, is really a good type of bird; of the two I prefer the latter, and for this reason: the tail of the male bird in the coloured illustration is carried far too high, and, in my opinion, this constitutes a serious fault. It is seldom,

however, we get the privilege of a peep at such specimens as these. We now come to that most important point, white in face. I fear this defect will not be eradicated as long as fanciers persist in breeding stock with such immense lobes, and our judges, by their awards to such exhibits, encouraging the same. For my part I would pass any birds showing this defect, however good they might be in other respects. If the standard issued for this variety is a recognised one (and I have never heard that it is not so), let us loyally carry it out. Any exhibit showing distinct traces of white in face has no claim to consideration; the defect is fatal. Fanciers would soon tire of sending such birds to shows if they were passed over a few times. It is satisfactory to note that some of our judges are really in earnest in the matter, and are determined to pass over such exhibits. Would that all would go and do likewise. Another great fault we are drifting into, high tails. I have noticed this at many of the shows I have attended during the past season. I like to see the tail carried well away to the rear ; it adds in no small degree to the symmetry and attractiveness of a specimen good in other respects. The comb should be as large as possible, provided in the male bird it is carried perfectly erect, not too smooth or rough in texture, evenly serrated, free from side dents, and reaching well back over the head. To carry a large comb upright, the base should be thick, and well set on a broad and long head ; in the female the comb should fall gracefully over side of face, slightly arched in front. The fashion at present seems to be immense combs ; I am no great admirer of such, I prefer them as large as possible, provided it does not interfere with the carriage and symmetry of the bird. I have often seen these heavy-combed birds moving about with their heads almost touching the ground, first looking one side, then trying to look the other, and to all appearances objects of misery. Lobes of moderate size, almond-shaped, smooth and well fitted on side of head; wattles long as possible, same texture as comb ; plumage, glossy green black ; plenty of thigh is an important point, and legs as dark as possible. Weight.—Cocks, 6½lb. to 8½lb. ; hens, 5lb. to 7lb., the latter weight, however, being somewhat rare.

I should like to impress upon you the desirability of judicious and careful consideration in the mating of your birds. Use your best endeavours to stamp out this detestable white in face ; breed only from specimens with sound red faces. I know from experience it is a matter that will not easily be accomplished, but perseverance

will not go unrewarded. We have among the members of this society many of the leading Minorca fanciers of the day, and every month adds to the number. We cannot all be challenge cup winners, but we can, one and all, do something to improve and uphold the good name of the variety on which much of our time, care and money is so often lavished. I thank you, gentlemen, for the opportunity you have afforded me this evening of laying before you my views respecting the variety of which I am an ardent admirer; to do them ample justice requires an abler pen than mine. Their progress has been a rapid one, and let us, one and all, endeavour to retain for them the reputation they have so honourably won.

CHAPTER XI.

TECHNICAL TERMS.

Brood.—A family of chickens all (or nearly all) of the same age, in charge of one hen.

Broody.—Desiring to sit or incubate. In some districts called "sittie."

Carriage.—The natural bearing or "style" in which a bird carries its body erect or otherwise.

Chick.—A newly hatched fowl generally only used for the first few weeks.

Chicken.—Young fowls of any age under twelve months.

Clutch.—A batch of eggs sat upon by a hen or placed in an incubator. Sometimes used as another term for "brood."

Cockerel.—A male bird under twelve months of age. The term is seldom applied to a bird after the end of the year in which it was hatched.

Comb.—The red growth on the top of a fowl's head.

Condition.—The state of a fowl's health particularly shown in the beauty of its plumage and its sprightly movements.

Crop.—A bag or receptacle which may be felt in front of the breast bone, and in which the food is stored before digestion.

Cushion.—The feathers which spring from the hidden portion of a bird's back, and which cover the roots of the tail feathers.

Dubbing.—Removal of any portion of the comb-wattles, &c. This is occasionally done when a Minorca cock's comb gets very large. It is said to make him more vigorous.

Ear-lobes.—The folds of white skin hanging from the ears. These are sometimes called "Deaf ears," but more frequently known as lobes.

Face.—The bare skin extending from the beak, round the eyes to the ears. In the Minorca should be a bright blood red. Mouldy face implies that the face, instead of being sound red in colour, appears to

be covered with a *slight* tinge of white all over. *Ticked face* implies that a few spots of white have begun to appear on the red. *Hairy face* implies that there are a quantity of small hairs growing on the face. *Gipsy face* implies that the face instead of being of a bright red colour is of a very dark almost black tinge.

Folded lobes.—The lobes folded so that the centre shrinks back and the tips come forward.

Fan tail.—The feathers of the tail spread out in the shape of a fan. The opposite of a whip tail.

Flights.—The long wing feathers which are used in flying, but are tucked up when not in use.

Fluff.—The soft downy feathers on and about the thighs.

Furnished.—When a bird has completely assumed its adult plumage—full tail and hackles—and its comb, lobes and wattles are fully grown, it is said to be furnished.

Gills.—Another (generally local) term for wattles.

Hackles.—The long narrow-pointed feathers which grow on the neck and cushion of a cock. In the hen they are round pointed. Those feathers growing from the cushion are usually called "the saddle hackle," whilst the term "hackle" alone generally means the neck feathers.

Hock.—The joint in the leg between the leg and the thigh.

Keel.—Another name for breast bone.

Leg.—Refers only to the portion covered with scales.

Primaries.—Another name for flights.

Pullet.—A young hen of current year (see Cockerel.)

Saddle.—The hinder part of the back.

Secondaries.—The quill feathers of the wing, which *may be seen* whilst the bird is resting, where they cover the flights, sometimes called lower butts.

Shaft.—The stem or quill of a feather.

Shank.—Another term for the scaly part of the leg.

Sickles.—The long curved feathers of the tail.

Shoulder Butts.—The end of the wings near the shoulder.

Snakey.—A term implying length of head and neck.

Sidesprigs.—Growths at the side of the comb.

Squirrel tailed.—The carriage of the tail over the back towards the head.

Spurs.—The horny growths on the inside of the leg just above the foot used by the cock in fighting. Sometimes they appear on

hens, and even pullets have been known to have them well developed.

Strain.—A race or family of fowls which by careful breeding and selection have acquired an individual character which they are sure to reproduce.

Symmetry.—The perfect proportion of each part of the body, every part balancing the other exactly, and all conforming to complete a perfect whole.

Stained Lobes.—The lobes being spotted or patched with red, oftentimes caused by the wind.

Thumb Marks.—Hollow places on the side of the comb.

Tucked Lobe.—The lobe puckered or creased, so that the centre projects outwards instead of being flat.

Tail Coverts.—The short, soft, curved, glossy feathers at the bottom of the tail.

Timber.—The quantity of bone in due proportion to the size of the bird.

Tail.—The straight stiff feathers inside the sickles and tail coverts.

Thighs.—The top joint of the leg covered with feathers.

Trio.—A cock or cockerel with a couple of hens or pullets.

White.—Face spots or streaks of white on the red face.

Wry Tail.—The carriage of the tail to either side out of the straight.

Whip Tail.—The carriage of the tail feathers close together clipping them lightly.

Wattles.—The red appendages growing under the beak, sometimes called gills.